CESARE BORGIA

TRANSLATED BY

ARTHUR SYMONS

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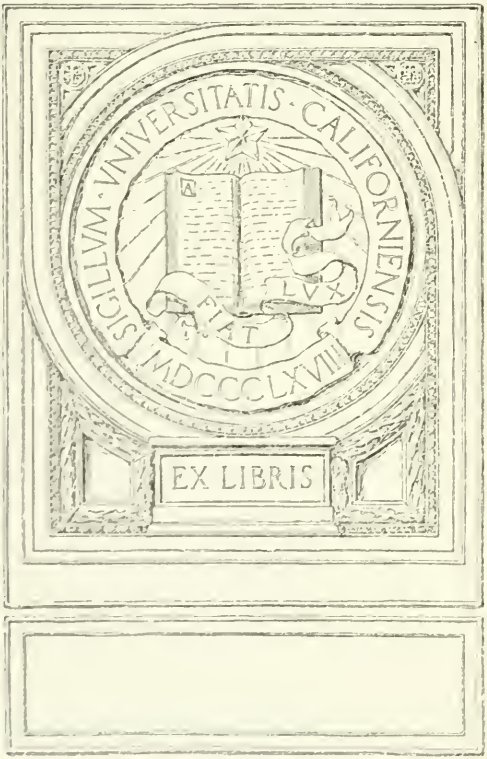
LOS ANGELES



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CESARE BORGIA
ISEULT OF BRITTANY
THE TOY CART

BY THE SAME WRITER

Poems (*Collected Edition in Two Volumes*). 1902.
An Introduction to the Study of Browning. 1886. 1906.
Aubrey Beardsley. 1898. 1905.
The Symbolist Movement in Literature. 1899.
Plays, Acting, and Music. 1903.
Cities. 1903.
Studies in Prose and Verse. 1904.
Spiritual Adventures. 1905.
The Fool of the World and Other Poems. 1906.
Studies in Seven Arts. 1906.
William Blake. 1907.
Cities of Italy. 1907.
The Romantic Movement in English Poetry. 1909.
Knave of Hearts. 1913.
Figures of Several Centuries. 1916.
Tragedies. 1916.
Tristan and Iseult. 1917.
Cities and Sea Coasts and Islands. 1918.

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ISEULT OF BRITTANY
THE TOY CART

BY

ARTHUR SYMONS

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BRENTANO'S
1920

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CONTENTS

Cesare Borgia 3
Iseult of Brittany 75
The Toy Cart 91

CESARE BORGIA

A TRAGEDY IN ONE ACT

By ARTHUR SYMONS

THE PERSONS

CESARE BORGIA, *Cardinal of Valencia*
SANCIA, *Princess of Aragon*
MICHELOTTO, *Cesare's Servant*
LUCREZIA BORGIA, *the Pope's Daughter*
GIOVANNI BORGIA, *Duke of Sandia*
POPE ALEXANDER VI
ASSASSINS
VANNOZZA CATANEI, *the Pope's Mistress*
IMPERIA

SCENE: *Rome, June, 1497.*

CESARE BORGIA

SCENE ONE

A Room of CESARE *in the Vatican*

Enter CESARE *and* SANCIA

SANCIA

Why is our flesh more cruel than man's love?

CESARE

There is no love that can outmeasure love.

SANCIA

I only know I am a tortured thing
And none of all the casuists of souls
Can set me dancing in the naked air.

CESARE

I am no Casuit, nor are my nerves tortured
As evil spirits are.

SANCIA

An evil spirit
Burns in you, Cesare. See, how it burns in me!

CESARE

Hate not the Beast, that laughs out of the Flesh!
Why do you touch your burning web of hair?

SANCIA

Do I? Sheer nerves, my dear! Rome's hot enough
For our blood's heat to be June's heat. I beat
My feet on the floor, as if one dances.

CESARE

Sancia,
What is obscure and inevitable in ourselves
Comes not from dancing nor from dreaming: dreams
Are the mirror of our consciousness; the dance
The rhythm of our being: but our Fate
Entangles us in a net we can't escape from.

SANCIA

This network that knots my hair — why subtilise
Beyond it?

CESARE

To mock mine own illusions.
There's something monstrous in your kind of beauty,
Yet Beauty, when accursed, becomes less monstrous,
And so more poisonous.

SANCIA

Am I a poison-flower
Grown in a soil only weeds grew in before
Some Satan planted my seed?

CESARE

Start not, Sancia,
At the shadow the setting sun casts on me — the shadow
Of a mere leaf in the wind.

SANCIA

And if I start?
I tell you, Cesare, there's a wind in my heart
That will not let me rest; there are great wings
Of birds that beat against the winds; storms
Everlasting and the unresting waters; loves
That are more drowsy than the bees at noon
That have trafficked on the heath and sucked the heather:
And I am all of these and none of these.

CESARE

Find out the dancing measures in our blood
And we'll not blush.

SANCIA

If blushes do become you —
Blush.

CESARE

I am neither sad nor am I sorry
We thus have met. Sadness befits not love;
But since the moon is far and your strange face
No fairer than the moon's, let all the winds
Invade our spirits; but, when we have drunk wine,
Always the dregs remain.

SANCIA

Of all sad songs
This is the saddest men ever sang. Come now,

There are no ghosts to go along with us;
And you that have so many mistresses
May tire of me that am your Sancia,
Your Sancia of the minute.

CESARE

There's no jesting-time
From this till midnight and when midnight's over
The jests begin: we shall have some wondrous jesting
When craft enters your eyes: you have more craft
Than the street-girls in Naples.

SANCIA

You think of — what?

CESARE

Of nothing.

SANCIA

Nay, of Giovanni.

CESARE

And if I choose to love him? As one tries
To love a thing one hates when one's in bed
And so turns on his pillow and forgets
And, waking, might remember either dream.
You might as well ask of a burning flame
To turn aside from burning not in love
The wood next it on the hearth.

SANCIA

Do you fear God?

CESARE

I use his name, I neither fear nor love
God, more than mine own Sire; who, sick at heart,
Fears God; and, with heart at ease after our revels,
Loves God. Our flesh must sleep to live. I sweep
Certain things to sideways, thus!

He unsheathes his dagger, turns his wrist and pierces a hole in the wall.

SANCIA

Madness and nerves,
In these I praise you, Cesare; as for Lucrezia,
I honour her; yea, I am honourless,
And yet I love Lucrezia.

CESARE

One must love her
In her strange tragic beauty; fires of Carthage
Burn in her eyes and Mâtho makes her mad
Because she has given him wine, and madness lies
Wherever poisoned love is mixed with hate.

SANCIA

There may be treason in you against me, Cesare!

CESARE

You might think twice before you think to say it
And I think thrice before I answer you.

SANCIA

You cannot hurt me much, not much, Cesare,
That burn two ways at once.

CESARE

One mine own way?

SANCIA

Perhaps: but that's no matter. Let it pass
As stolen kisses. We are not here for nothing.
I swear to you with all body, Cesare!
We are watched, we are watched.

CESARE

The Devil watches all things,
Waking and sleeping. He outwatches God
Whose heaven is not more lonely than his hell.

SANCIA

Night for the blood of animals, and the day
For men to crush each other; certain hours
For strategy: then the blood-beaten pulses
Of the world — ours, that is — as it reels into night,
Or staggers into day through the red mists.

CESARE

These shining wings of words as gaudy poppies
That flame at noon serve you.

SANCIA

As for Giulia,
I never saw such hair in all my life,
Pure red gold hair down to her feet when she undoes it.

CESARE

Satan my father knows what beauty is.

SANCIA

So Giulia, the adulteress: what else
In this so moral Rome?

CESARE

Why, what else? Giulia
Holds in her little hands the spiritual head
Of the world's Church.

SANCIA

Purple paid for her shame.

CESARE

It marvels me
You never loved Giovanni's fair bedfellow —
One sleeps with shame — Maria Enriquez.

SANCIA

Love her or like her. Leave the creature alone.
Am I not Sancia, Princess of Aragon?
And who is she? Some say a household rat,
But I say no. Yet I have a mind, I say,
To let some honest creature such as her
Stumble into a deep grave.

CESARE

Leave alone honesty.

SANCIA

You make me laugh. Make me a toy. Cesare,
I'm a wicked child — such children love strange toys;
And mine must be a cruel-featured idol

Made after Artemis who hangs on the horns
Of the Crescent moon, mocking her own image
As she swung in the wind there.

CESARE

Satan's child you are not,
In spite of what I might be. Satan makes
Strange mistakes sometimes; and he gave me gifts
God never thought of.

SANCIA

What gifts had he to give you,
Cesare?

CESARE

Mysterious, merciless, monstrous things,
And tales of those who had played chess on many nights,
Waiting and waiting for the stroke of a sword.

SANCIA [*slowly*]

You mean, there may be playing of chess to-night,
Or next night, to be decided by the sword?

CESARE

Nay, I mean nothing. When shall I sleep with you
Next?

SANCIA

When the half-moon shines over Rome.

CESARE

The night after to-morrow.

Enter MICHELOTTO

I never sent for you.

MICHELOTTO

Pardon me, my lord.

CESARE

Pardon? You mean you have strangled — what do I know?
Some lewder rogue than you are.

MICHELOTTO

I have not strangled
Anyone. Only His Holiness the Pope
Bade me say he desires you come to him,
The case being urgent.

CESARE

Urgent? What do you mean?

MICHELOTTO

My words have no other meaning.

CESARE

Sancia,
I leave you in the care of — Michelotto!

Exit CESARE

SANCIA

Your name's more terrible than your reputation.

MICHELOTTO

Mere stricken sounds upon a hollow drum
A zany plays before a mountebank.

SANCIA

An elevated kind of criminal
That has the knavery of evils?

MICHELOTTO

Nearer the mark.

SANCIA

Are you not Cesare's damned soul?

MICHELOTTO

For him I'd dare damnation!

SANCIA

I admire you.
I have some hates that hang about my throat —
No hates that you have strangled.

MICHELOTTO

I strangle no hates
But I am paid to strangle hateful men.

SANCIA

Part of your business, of this trade of yours,
And then — assassination!

MICHELOTTO

Assassination! Princess!

SANCIA

So did Aegisthus, the hateful, helping the hateful
Clytemnestra, in the Tale that's on all tongues.
A murder says one — a squabble before supper.

MICHELOTTO

These were old wicked mountains in the air
That had the abhorred conscience of some murder.
And, what am I beside these? I exist.

SANCIA

"Naked as brown feet of unburied men,"
Someone said that; it means that burial
May not be needed. Ah, you chafe at this!
I speak of Cesare; yea, even at this time,
This most keen joint of time, when there's confusion
That might turn to worse than ruin, even God's wrath
Might turn not back, spare nothing: I ask of you:
Who knows what Cesare means?

MICHELOTTO

I know not.

SANCIA [*slowly*]

You know not?

MICHELOTTO

Nay: only the benediction that he gave me
One night after the wine.

Re-enter CESARE

CESARE

I caught one word. Enough: the Zodiac's changed!

Exit MICHELOTTO

Does God forgive ever?

SANCIA

God never. Do you forgive?

CESARE

Can I forgive? Nay, in me all my desires
Burn up each part and parcel of my life
As if my feet trod down the infernal fires.
And the Pope tires me.

Enter LUCREZIA

LUCREZIA

Does the Pope tire you, Cesare?
You start: your colour runs up like a maid's.

CESARE

I would I were one; hey, you startled me,
As one who has stolen a peach and drops it. The heat's intense.

LUCREZIA

Give me your fan, Sancia, I dropt mine. You laugh?
Thanks. I were fain there were a toneless storm
Murmuring, with wind behind it. How my heart beats.
I can't keep quiet. Am I not beautiful.
Sancia?

SANCIA

Beautiful.

LUCREZIA

She says it, Cesare,
Between her lips, just like some dainty word
You think might please a caged bird. The bird
Nods its head and hates its cage and you.
I must hate someone. There's no one here to hate.
Where's Giovanni?

CESARE

He may be here to-night.
I saw him last enter Imperia's house

As I turned a corner. She leaned from a window; vine
Crawled on her naked back; and she had seen him
And laughed as some man caught her by her arms
Behind her in the room. Such are bought kisses.

LUCREZIA

Bought kisses from a painted creature? There's
No symbol of the vine nor of the wine
But of the window and her naked back.
And then you hear her cry on God: "O hell!
What's left but hell, when I am but a name,
Who had such beauty, to be whirled with wind,
Hot wind in hell's intense heat? And all my spices
And all my vices gone! And I that loved
Men's kisses more than life; to have come to shame,
And so die shamed." Cesare, you hear her cry!

CESARE

So might Imperia when death comes on her
And she lies wasted, and her beauty's vain
As her face seen in her mirror.

LUCREZIA

I say to you, poured
On the ground like untasted water, after the wine
Is tasted, such beauty might be, when desire
Desires desire and that desire's denied.

SANCIA

Hopeless, estranged, unchanged.

LUCREZIA

What do you mean?

SANCIA

Nay, I mean nothing; any more than sleep
Tells ever what it means.

LUCREZIA

To be estranged
Is what I want, who want so little else.

CESARE

So little else?

LUCREZIA

Do you think I want the world?
I want — I know not what; for all I have
Is given me: life and youth and health and beauty —
And riches and jewels and rings; these clothes I wear
This fan, not mine, I take from Sancia. Nay,
One's beauty is one's beauty.

SANCIA

Do you love, Lucrezia,
Giovanni?

LUCREZIA

How you startle me, Sancia dear!
My blood stirs not at his name; only this fan
Trembles a little: or is it the wind in the room
That stirs it? In so much heat, how hot the wind,
June's wind. Giovanni? Shameless you are, Sancia,
Who ought to know —

SANCIA

Who ought to know too much?

CESARE

Giovanni sacrifices to the rebellious angels.

LUCREZIA

How this heat tires me! There are nets to weave
Out of soft sleep and subtler scents to snare
Youth that is so much younger than the world.

SANCIA

"Rebellious angels?" So, one sacrifices,
Still, to the fallen gods?

CESARE

Shed blood, my Sancia,
May still be sacrificed.

LUCREZIA

In some cunning way,
As look you, out of this my sinful soul,
On those my sinful lips when, being vexed,
They bite the blood?

CESARE

A goodly bait to men.

LUCREZIA

God send me a better bait! These Spaniards, now,
Where are they?

CESARE

They live with me.

LUCREZIA

They keep me waiting. An evil genius
Presided at my tragic birth, yet am I
Evil? My life shall be tragic; Spanish blood
Runs ever hotly in us, Cesare!
I know I shall be a mockery in men's ears
In women's mouths a scorn; a windy laughter,
A fire that flamed, a sail in a grey rain:
And this shall be my Dirge.
"Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin, their conception, their birth, weeping?
Their life, a general mist of error,
Their death, a hideous storm of terror."

Enter GIOVANNI

GIOVANNI [*sings mockingly*]

"Their death, a hideous storm of terror!"
I came light-hearted; now you dash my mirth
As from Gian the jester might have in Verone
At Can La Scala's Court, where Dante turned
The fool's jest to a witty pun on words.

CESARE

These are but senseless cries out of your mouth.
Only, I seem to see a shadow slanting,
That lengthens, and is thrusting out a foot
That might be yours. Come you, aside with me.

Exeunt

SCENE TWO

In the Vatican

Enter POPE ALEXANDER *and* CESARE BORGIA

THE POPE

There is a monstrous error in the world:
Who shall deliver us from too much love
Save the sunderer of hearts? This is not love,
But some horrible conspiracy of things
That casts one's days out like departing guests.

CESARE

If there is anyone you love with rage,
Who but Giulia Farnese? Her eyes and mouth
Deny and invite. They say she is Christ's Bride,
But when she dances she lures one: when she laughs
She is the image of one who stands at the door
Of a Tavern giving on a den of thieves.

THE POPE

I would that I were moral, Cesare,
That know myself abnormal; know that vice
Is simply vice, and, if there exists virtue
Here in these hot streets where the wanton women —

CESARE

Go painted like the idolatrous images
That worship only the clang of metal; those
Have but brief lives, and thieve the lives of men.

THE POPE

Thieves that steal forth at night: none shall requite them.
We are dramatic; poised on a point of time
Not even poisonous. Last night that hot feast-room
When Lucrezia was so pale, so strangely pale,
And Sancia flushed with wine and lust of the flesh
Stared down Giovanni with her treacherous eyes
Where Vannozza was not, strike on all my senses
As if the door of a furnace had been suddenly
Opened in that brief, speechless minute, showing
Glimpses of hell, and then as suddenly shut.
And yet the feast went on.

CESARE

The feast went on.
I had no fever, thought of no such things;
A conjuror might juggle in his hands
And so deceive you; there's no such deception
Left to us now.

THE POPE

None, none! Are we not too naked
In all men's sight? Yea, God hath fashioned us
For other uses than these, for other means.

CESARE

Do we not play into each other's hands?

THE POPE

I have no rival.

CESARE

Nay, you have no rival.
So far you hold all your vices well in hand:

So far. I say no more. We have had content —
Content with our own selves. I say to you
We shall soon move pity and terror.

THE POPE

One must act,
Cesare.

CESARE

And, after having mimed and acted,
God's to be reckoned with.

THE POPE

Sublime you are not;
Shall God have ever pity of us, Cesare?

CESARE

Site, if I see not as God or Satan might
Myself, I find you, godless on your throne,
A splendid strangling serpent of strange cunning —
Image of the pride, defiance, revolt and sin
That makes the axles of the live earth turn —
Coiling around some semblances of good,
And venomously round semblances of evil.

THE POPE

So it might be, Cesare, so it might be.
I am I, yet I know not what I am
Some say of me — they may be right or wrong —
That in mine own self I possess the ignoblest
Vices whose heads have risen since Satan fell —
Crowned serpent of the nether clefts of Hell —
Out of the heaven he hated.

CESARE

A word in your ear,
Sire. Pardon me, but has not Giovanni
Accused you, accused me, with strange menaces
Of incest with Lucrezia — lies more damnable
Than truths on a liar's tongue?

THE POPE

I curse not him
Yet. Such menaces are the Devil's own
Inventions for the credulous ears of those
Whose tongues do lick up poison. It has been known
The pavement sinks under a woman's feet;
It has been known that limbs are easily
Contaminated; and that some, being foully tortured
Have eaten strange flesh. Such prodigious things
Breed more prodigious mixtures.

CESARE

More prodigious
Than these there shall not be. Mere menaces
Shall make us more merciless. Sweet Christ of mine,
What shall I do for your sake? Some smell of blood
Some dust that hurts me, some wind's thunderstorm,
Some puddled rain-shallows: more teasing things
Than these that bite and sting one: just for her
Sake, Lucrezia's. Sire, her life's too flame-like
And her desires consume her.

THE POPE

In you and me
Lives a live cloud and a more living flame.
Which flame shall rise, rise, to consume the cloud?
Which cloud, which flame, shall beat the other back?

CESARE

Let flesh and blood make answer. I have none.

THE POPE

Men shall cast hard stones at me, drag me alive
Before they think to slay me, in God's sight
These being shameless; they have eaten poisonous words
And are not choked withal. Nay, I may drink
Be made drink, the Lord's cup of derision. Yet shall not I
Die by these means. For having made me man
He shall not slay me utterly, being his Pope,
And His anointed.

CESARE

Look you between your feet,
Lest a snare take them though the ground be good.
Death will have nought of altar and altar-song
Although a man go cloaked up to the chin.

THE POPE

Verily I may be smitten by other gods
That are to me most alien.

CESARE

I bid you hold
Keen danger by the skirt, grip hands with him.

THE POPE

Yea, one Creed chokes another as gross weeds
That hate the flowers they mix with, hideously.

To move men's minds to travail: that's the word
I want. Might I but have the Spirit of God!

CESARE

Yea, the Almighty. Soon shall come the time
When we shall stand, naked, and face to face
Before no throne, nor Satan's throne nor God's.

THE POPE

Then shall the Vatican tremble, filled with clouds
Contagious.

CESARE

Time comes not on leaden wings.
Yet on a certain night, when no sun shines
And moonlight's pale, and we shall only hear
Men stir uneasily as in sleep that pace
The Piazza, and there enter, insolently,
The Wind and air of night (the air we breathe,
The wind bat-like) and every corner of our souls,
Corner and coign and cranny shall be filled
With an ominous sense of deeds that have been done
And undone deeds, and find no way to grope
Anywhere out of the nets of guilt and sin,
Of crime and blood-shedding: then shall the Wheel of Fortune
Turn in the void, and, on one turning wheel,
No Christ fall off his Crucifix, but the image
Of the Temptress of our Sins, pale as in Naples,
Sancia, with painted cheeks, ripe for hell's fire.

Exeunt

SCENE THREE

The Appartamento Borgia in the Vatican

Enter CESARE *and* LUCREZIA

CESARE

If God exists, then I exist; my Sire
Also, with length of years, unnatural nights,
Dreams abominable, fleshly desires that make
His very limbs ache; for with blood like his —
Hot as the African sun that burns on Spain
Over Elche and Valencia — Arab blood
That makes one mad; I ask you, Lucrezia,
What more can any desire in any father
Than we who have Christ's Vicar for our Sire?

LUCREZIA

Why not? We have all we want; but wanting means
More than we want. Our birth's enravelling
We must leave to Nature. Why is it I don't love Rome?
Because I hate not to be wholly Spanish,
Not to have been born in Spain, and not to have had
Raven tresses: blue black, lustrous, coiled,
Such as they dip in a fountain in Cordova —
Josefa, Dolores; and they sit in the sun there
And drink the fierce sky in.

CESARE

You ask me why?
Because our flaming hearts burn inward, burn not
Outward, to escape the intolerable pain
Of their reclusion.

LUCREZIA

We are like stormy sunsets
That have no sunrises. Have we not seen in visions
Christ's blood stream in the firmament?

CESARE

And God's wrath
In painted pictures. Yet we were born in April.

LUCREZIA

I love lilies more than the roses; roses
Burn in my cheeks, my skin is white as lilies.
And yet I sigh for Venus and Adonis,
He the sweet Knight she loved, and she the wanton
That let him perish; I sigh more for Atalanta,
That strange pure virgin, stainless save for the wild blood
She shed — the boar's — for whose sake Meleager
Perished, Althea's virginal son, in Calydon.

CESARE

Will you pray for me, Lucrezia, if I am suddenly
Slain?

LUCREZIA

Pray for your soul, I might; as for your body, No.

CESARE

How your eyes are upon me! Stir not madness
In this hot blood that aches for loveliness,
Yours more than other's.

LUCREZIA

I cannot love you more
Than I have always loved you, Cesare.
And, now I love you as you love me: yet
All my love is not wholly yours.

CESARE

You love?

LUCREZIA

Vanozzal.

CESARE

And the Pope?

LUCREZIA

No more nor less,
If I think well of the manner of my loving
To him-ward: and I would the winds and waters
Washed me as clean in certain men's reports
As I am pure in nature.

CESARE

Heed nothing now!

LUCREZIA

Cesare,
We have drunk the wine of love as lovers have
Ever since love itself created love. This drunk,
We never are the same. Shame be to me
If ever I forget you or forgive you!

CESARE

Why, you suspect me?

LUCREZIA

If I do suspect you,
Why not?

CESARE

Why not? Have I done you wrong?

LUCREZIA

Much wrong.

CESARE

More than Giovanni?

LUCREZIA

O, much less, much less.

CESARE

You know that I am evil?

LUCREZIA

Evil and cruel: one
None ever fathomed; you are unfathomable.
Deep as the sea in storms. In wronging me
You wrong yourself.

CESARE

How wonderful you are
Lucrezia! I could kiss these feet of yours
Now — if it were worth kneeling.

LUCREZIA

So you say,
Who have knelt often to Sancia.

CESARE

Sancia?

LUCREZIA

Sancia.

CESARE

You are most fair and fearful, feminine,
Not faultless, but you breathe warm heights of the air,
And the extreme heavens find favour in your sight.

LUCREZIA

Feminine I am, not fearful; fair, not fierce;
And when I breathe the warm air things ruinous
Pass in my vision: I see the realms of the Dead —
Not the extreme heavens — where Faustina dances
With Helen, and the dark gods of Hades laugh.

CESARE

Were I in Hades I would dance with them!

LUCREZIA

You mean with Sancia?

CESARE

With Faustina.

LUCREZIA

I see:
With living beauty in hell rather than with living
Beauty on earth. We spoke of wine. Drink this.
She offers him wine
It might be, for all I know, made of hell's fire.

Why do you turn so pale? As if some stupor
Had fallen on you, and hell lay just beneath
The Vatican, and a dead man's face stared up
Out of the depths?

CESARE *dashes the glass of wine on the floor with a nervous gesture; the wine stains the floor like blood.*

CESARE [*slowly*]

Out of some stupor? Lucrezia?
I have seen no dead man's face; we are not in hell;
I know that I am pale and you are not.
There lies the blood of the wine that I have spilt,
And there it shines between us; blood turned wine:
Wine that no man shall drink; blood that no man
Shall ever taste.

LUCREZIA

This is most strange in you.

CESARE

Forgive me for what I have said.

LUCREZIA

Of me? To me?
Against me?

CESARE

Against you, never; of you, perhaps;
To you, too often.

LUCREZIA

Nay, not often enough.
Listen! I think I hear the Pope's footsteps.

CESARE

Let's share him. Some are of the Devil's crew
And none from the Ghetto steered them.

The POPE *enters*

THE POPE

I catch your word.
You know for certain what one says in Spain
Sounds in Rome just as jarring in one's ears
As someone coughing when one hangs him up.

LUCREZIA

There's much more evil here
Than one supposes.

THE POPE

Evil, why not evil? This insolent heat
Is over; but I have a quickened sense
In my imagination; some hollow heat
Of hell returning makes this room turn red.
Now to supplant some evil: as when the Tiber
Turns hideous with dead drifting things upon it.

CESARE

There is between its banks a troublous tide —
A tide tongued with windless words, that takes
None of the laughing colours of our streets.

LUCREZIA

"Dead drifting things": that makes me shudder; somehow
This day has been most evil; women's praise
Is lost on me: I am thrown into some humour.

THE POPE

Some fever in the blood, a girl's mere malady
That leaves her, laughing; something under the girdle
Perhaps too warm.

CESARE

Now he jests cruelly
Yea, but blood slain shall not be healed again
Nor heat the forsaken flesh.

Enter GIOVANNI

GIOVANNI

You jibe at flesh?

CESARE

Nay, at forsaken flesh; and blood unhealed.

GIOVANNI

You are too keen on blood.

LUCREZIA

Giovanni mine,
There's little love between you.

GIOVANNI

Was there ever?

CESARE

Was there ever?

LUCREZIA

You ring the echo like unchristened bells
On a Cathedral that some demon pulls.
Giovanni, there was laughter on your lips
When your lips smote on Cesare's.

GIOVANNI

He checked mine,
Lucrezia, he checks mine always now.

CESARE

Now,
Now, more than ever?

GIOVANNI [*with irony*]

More than ever, Cesare.

THE POPE

Cease, cease your words, O my evil sons!
Certainly mine, as certainly not of God's
Begetting, why do you tear at each other so,
Not literally, but with more hateful words
Than hate might utter? Satan, had he had sons,
His might have fought no less, for less just reasons,
Than you, my Giovanni, than you, my Cesare.

CESARE

We may be of Satan's seed, we are seed of our sire,
Seed of Vannozza.

THE POPE

I think there is a menace in the air;
I feel it in every fibre of my being.

LUCREZIA

In hell are beds of perfume and sad sound,
And there with nerve and bone one multiplies
Extreme pleasure out of an extreme pain;
And all the gateways smoke with fumes of flames
And all the serpents hiss and lift their heads.

CESARE

Giovanni, you must know one has been in hell —
Take you deep note of this — where are shaken sighs
In that uncertain state where women walk
Along the streets with loosened hair and girdles
Unbound and eyes that frighten you: the Sun
Ceases and the stars wonder, and all Hell
Is filled from end to end with endless shame.

GIOVANNI

There is a terror in the roots of my hair
And a certain seething fire beneath my head
And all my flesh grows faint and feverish
And there's an anguish in my very bones.
What God, what Devil, shall deliver me
Out of the hands of these mine enemies?

CESARE

Shall Gods bear bit and bridle, fool, of men?
Can any fool baffle Satan and God?
For all these rest now as lots that yet undrawn
Lie in the lap of the unknown hour.

THE POPE

Cry not so much, Giovanni,
Words far too feverish. On this Crucifix
I have upon me I bid you cease your raving!

GIOVANNI

Do I grovel? Am I a thing made to spit on,
A thing for shame to spit on?

CESARE [*aside*]

This night hell's lips
Shall open and shut once.

LUCREZIA

Giovanni, why
This monstrous mockery that has no name:
No name, say I? as if our very name
Were rent as carrion by the vulturous beaks
That feed on fame and soil it.

THE POPE

Will you hear me, Giovanni?
Were but Vannozza here that she might hear me
Last night I dreamed—God help me!—that I climbed
Infinite spirals that touched not hell nor heaven
But changed to ladders, every rung of them
Dropt away from me as my feet felt them, then
I fell, I fell, sucked under a slimy floor
Where serpents crawled, coiled, curdled; and then down
Into annihilation. Yet I heard over me
The moon's evil laugh, the sea-waves' hiss;
Then soul and body parted at the stroke
And out of an infinitely sharp suspense
I woke.

GIOVANNI

God's mercy! May I never dream
The like of that! Such dreams forebode much evil.

CESARE

God's mercy, say you? Ask not that of Him.
I shall not tell you the evil dream I had

For if three dream bad dreams one of us three
Has life's hand on his left, death's on his right.

GIOVANNI

Death's on his right, you say? I take no heed,
This night, of life nor death. I sleep not here
To-night.

CESARE

In the Trastavere?

GIOVANNI

Why do you ask
Me? Where I go is not far from the Ghetto,
Where stands a hideous palace whose huge stone walls
Exude the slime of an embodied crime.

CESARE

The Cenci Palace. Opening of stealthy doors
There have I heard; near by stand villainous houses;
And, on a certain night, being alone,
Giovanni, I heard scrape on a window-pane
What certainly was the sharpening of a knife.

Exit GIOVANNI

THE POPE

He bade me not good-night!

LUCREZIA

The corpse-like bride
That leads in endless night, awaits him there.

CESARE

A corpse-like curse.

THE POPE

I would this night were over!

LUCREZIA

I would it were not over. A brideless bride,
Whose eyes have sucked in the noon's heat, whose perfumed
Body is odorous as the Orient, her heavy
Eyes masking a pool that has no depth
Save unseen nakedness, her subtle hands
Mesmeric, her pure breath that slays a man,
Awaits him, pale before her mirror, whose fair flesh
Lures a man's steps more than a snake a bird.

CESARE

You make me think of Ostia, where the Tiber
Bends, making its escape seaward, where, on a night,
A perfumed night, Cleopatra's galley went,
A scented galley like the scented Queen,
Its way to Egypt, where, on a certain day,
No Caesar came but news of Caesar's death.

Exeunt

SCENE FOUR

A Room in MICHELOTTO'S *House*

CESARE, MICHELOTTO *and* ASSASSINS

CESARE

Aut Cesar, aut Nihil: invented maliciously,
Out of old logic and tenacious will,
That's my device. But for the present this
Question is all-important, vital as life:
What must be done and never left undone;
If not we lose our time in vain conjectures.
Blood of his blood, bone of his bone, my Father
Owns me his first-born. He has done much for me
But nothing like the length of my desires.
Think what I have done for him and myself!
What have you gained from serving him, Michelotto?

MICHELOTTO

My Lord, none works for nothing: he gave me nothing.

CESARE

I am a Cardinal — with a difference —
And the Pope made me Cardinal. Perhaps I chafe
A little at the title. Blood is blood
And in my blood desire in the extreme excites me
To deeds the night might start at; deeds not done
Yet, in the seven hells.

FIRST ASSASSIN

Our trade is trade;
We beg not.

SECOND ASSASSIN

And we love not.

CESARE

If I love not
This brother of mine, nor ever loved him, I
Begged never a favour from him. Words like these
Stir up intents that lead to events. The event
To come is just as ripe as a ripe apple
A snake stung in the grass. So if one bites it,
The apple, that is, he is just dead. You seize
The meaning of my parable?

MICHELOTTO

I seize it.

CESARE

I name not the name I need not name. Let pass
His name as the wind that passes. Sin is sin
And love is love and that's not all: the end
Of all is death.

THIRD ASSASSIN

Yea, you have said the word.

CESARE

And after that the Judgment. I judge not
The man I name as God might judge me, when
We meet, if meet we might. This dagger's point
Of mine that aches in its sheath so quickens me,
Now, as I touch it: don't you see, Michelotto,
That every nerve in my mind is touched to the quick
As the dagger's point that touches a man's skin;
And that in my subtle and most intricate spirit

Visions are laid bare, and that the speech must come
From stress and struggle of things, till there be perfected
The keystone of mine own work, and I set myself
Utterly free from a being that cries in mine ear.
Forever?

MICHELOTTO

Fire is not more fervent than you are;
Yet certain flames are easily put out.

THIRD ASSASSIN

As in a tavern where the candles burn
The roof-trees down.

CESARE

Nay, nay, no wine-gossip;
Something more wonderful than wine! What else
But naked and bare tragedy?

THIRD ASSASSIN

Bare tragedy?

FIRST ASSASSIN

It may sound singular, but I think you mean
Just what we mean on any common day
That hit our heels together in the jumping
Of that which preys on actless action.

CESARE

There
You strike a note that rings. One must take heart
And bend no idle knees to any God

That grimaces in a garden. If I could put
The hate I have, the love I have not, for
Him I have named, why, then, if God is God,
God must not be thought on; for the act that's mine
Acts with God never.

MICHELOTTO

So mad Nero said
That set Rome's roofs on fire, and loved the fire
That bade destruction ruin half of Rome.

CESARE

Let me see for myself if this be so!
And then, one gives a name to a certain name.

MICHELOTTO

A very nameless thing, an evil thing
That needs no devil's sanction.

FIRST ASSASSIN

What the devil
Are we here for? The devil take me if —

CESARE

We need something dramatic, grip and strength,
And more than that, a drama never acted
Yet, on so small a stage. Now, here's one crisis
That has no climax.

MICHELOTTO

You others there, look up;
Don't be such tongue-tied beasts. I'm body and soul
Cesare's; say the same.

ASSASSINS

Body and soul we are his.

CESARE

I thank you all; take this, a Spaniard's thanks.
Conspirators, I think, have no braver souls
Than we have; and I seal my Catholic faith,
Not for the first nor the last time, on this deed
The moon shall hate not, hot in our Roman sky.
There is no greater question than this peril
That imperils all of us. Were it so paid.
All's over. You must not so stormily
Stare on me, for here is simply naught but storm,
Tempest and terror.

THIRD ASSASSIN

Here are simply our bodies;
Hell knows if we have souls.

CESARE

Our souls are tossed
On winds of flame and over waves that waft us
I know not what strange scents. Above is hell,
Let one suppose, and underneath is heaven.
And God's in hell and Satan is in heaven.
And we, we watch and pray not: yet the hour
We pray not for is nigh at hand.

MICHELOTTO

What hour?

CESARE

A certain moonlit night. One's out of tune,
The Pope might well be; for I know he knows not
Aught of my meaning I have here delivered
By word of mouth. And yet he guessed at it,
By certain signs in his eyes and in his gestures.

MICHELOTTO

Always he adored Giovanni: for his sins
Are sensual enough: he is capricious,
And shadows make him start.

CESARE

So shall the shadows
Start when Giovanni passes, mighty ministers
Of all the mischiefs. Nay, there is never a vengeance
Anywhere in this world like mine own vengeance
That cries and must not be hurt.

SECOND ASSASSIN

The great thing is
To strike but once.

THIRD ASSASSIN

The great thing is to strike
Till there's no room to think a man's alive.

CESARE

There is no room, and yet the man's alive,
The being that cries ever in mine ears,
A crying that is more insatiable than the wind's,

A crying that is more intolerable than the sea's.
I hold to the helm of Fortune. And have I not
Every just reason in this reasonless world
To remit this just, this deadly deed to other's
Hands and not mine? I remit this to your hands:
And, with these words, I bid you all Good-night.

Exit CESARE

SCENE FIVE

VANNOZZA'S *Vineyard in San Pietro in Vincola*

VANNOZZA

The Serpents have been gliding in the streets
And we're outside the gates of Paradise
But not as exiles from the wrath of God.

CESARE

Fear not God's anger. Satan is a Serpent.
These live in passionately untempered evil
And sin has clothed them with their slimy skin
That makes thought itself weary.

SANCIA

Thought itself
Thinks inwardly. The snakes have fascination
And never think even of the poison in them
That turns from violent life to violent death.

GIOVANNI

Cesare, your strangling, cruel, serpent eyes
Are fixed on mine; they will not draw me in
Your magic circle.

VANNOZZA

Why do you shiver, Giovanni?

CESARE

As one whose leg is sunk up to the knee
In the earth of a new-made grave?

GIOVANNI

No, no, no, no!
Does a wolf caught in a trap shiver?

SANCIA

You make me laugh.
I think of a girl we know, one Benedicta,
A pretty sort of baggage is that child!

GIOVANNI

Pretty she may be: the devil take me if
I know what you are driving at, you two —
Conspirators, perhaps.

CESARE

That's very strange
Giovanni mine; and the devil take me if
You haven't uttered a word I never thought
Had leapt to your lips.

SANCIA

How your lips twist and twitch,
Giovanni! Have we hurt you? Anyhow
You seem to grudge us every word we say —
If grudging were worth a coin one tosses.

GIOVANNI

Lucrezia —
Would she were here! — would hate you; how I hate
You, Sancia!

SANCIA

Me, Sancia? Because the stars are fewer
In heaven's span, and June's not over yet,
And stings are stings: the Ghetto's something too
And people quite improper who trip there
On their own errands; these you ought to know.

GIOVANNI

Suppose I do not, or suppose I do,
What matters it?

CESARE

It matters very much;
You may have greater knowledge than we have
Of those one hangs like rats that squeak too much
And care not overmuch for the merciful bowels
Of Mother Church, and get few crumbs cast to them,
Anyhow, from anyone's table.

GIOVANNI

That's odd enough;
For don't Jews help one to one's sins, who help
None to the Gods they don't believe in?

CESARE

"Thou sayest
It."

VANNOZZA

How your nerves are jangling! Wrangle not
With wicked words. This is no orchard-pit
Where bones of dead men lie.

GIOVANNI

"Where dead men lie?"

CESARE

Nay, bones of dead men.

VANNOZZA

Will you never end?
You play on words, words always. By the light of love
I have for you, this Thursday is wholly mine,
Mine utterly and yours. It is Passion Week!
For God's dear sake, don't leave me on this night
Of nights, for I am passionate to want you
In all my love to keep you here all night.

CESARE

Your fairer son leaves with your swarthier son,
This very night of nights.

GIOVANNI

This night of nights? So says your swarthier son
Who has all that's lacking in me; so he thinks;
So think not I. He ever had his will
Fixed as the four winds in the world's four quarters.
They change their will: he changes his: some wind
Is ever in his laughter; but his laughter
Is colder than the winter wind.

SANCIA

You are right,
Giovanni: What keen insight suddenly
Shakes you out of your wonted fashion?

VANNOZZA

Can Cesare
Answer this?

CESARE

Why should I answer? You might as well ask me
Is the road safe to Naples? That I know not.
Only, whether the roads be safe or not,
To-morrow finds us on our way to Naples.

GIOVANNI

So Pontius Pilate might have said to Christ.

Outside is heard a voice singing

Don Cesare laughs at God
And drinks light wine to the brim.
He scourges the Pope with a rod
Of his wrath and his head makes nod
The stars that laugh at him.

GIOVANNI

It is your turn to shiver, Cesare,
Now.

CESARE

I? Never. It is the voice of Gian the Jester
Who followed me: not that he's mine; Lucrezia's
Favourite Jester.

SANCIA

Why's not Lucrezia here?

CESARE

For her soul's sake.

GIOVANNI

For her soul's sake! For her sins' sake, more likely,
Considering the life we lead.

VANNOZZA

She's my child.
If she be sinless or sinful, she's my child;
And I defy the world to sever us!

CESARE

There flames the real Vannozza; she who keeps
Herself so much out of our way. The mother in her
Survives the Sinneress.

VANNOZZA

Eh, you still jibe at me:
Your jests strike never hard. For I am one
That has but little will, one easily swayed,
And never know if evil turns to right:
Nor if God really loves us.

GIOVANNI

That's a saying
Our Sire might solve.

CESARE

A saying he dare not solve.

SANCIA

Indeed he dare not.

CESARE

Now take this case, Giovanni:
Suppose I choose to go by night, as you do, always,
Masked and disguised, in quest of one knows what,
Tripping on light heels after any adventure?

GIOVANNI

Where sportive ladies have their doors ajar?

CESARE

Exactly so. You must not hunt me out,
In that case, for I never hunted you.

GIOVANNI

Hugely you say these threats; when the street's hushed
You won't do that.

CESARE

Nay, not for some intense girl
That entreats you with the eyes, when one in Church
Crosses her: not for Christ's passion on the Cross!

SANCIA

You get about the best that God invents
In finding simple beauty, with a soul.

VANNOZZA

Why talk of women always? This one night —
Nay, not our last — don't spoil: that were bad luck.

GIOVANNI

Cesare, forgive me, for our Mother's sake.

They take each other's hands

CESARE

There's no forgiveness needed. Words are wind
And wine is wine; and we are at the Feast.

GIAN [*passes singing*]

I have gone on without thinking
If the cup that I am drinking
May not overflow the brim;
And I wonder this should be,
Death can dare to think of me
Seeing I never thought of him.

GIOVANNI [*leaping up*]

Confound the creature! Had I the chance to catch him
His ears had paid for this insult.

SANCIA

Sit down; be quiet. There have been things worse
Than this to be endured. By all the Saints
You are wrong, wrong.

GIOVANNI [*sits down*]

Suppose I am, or right
It is no mercy of mine to let him go
Unhanged, who well might decorate a gateway;
Only, I let him go, his neck unbroken.

CESARE

Is that your choice? You had no other choice.

GIOVANNI

Suppose I had my choice the man were hanged.

CESARE

You said before: "his neck." You change your mind.

GIOVANNI

Men's necks are broken easily enough.

CESARE

Not half as easily as having a man slain.

GIOVANNI

Slain, yes.

CESARE

Nay, I say, striving after things done right
Or acts done wrong can never lead to much.

GIOVANNI

Will you rain curses on a woman's lips?

CESARE

Even the rain can't wash a wound quite clean.

SANCIA

Well, what with wounds and blood and rain and curse
And necks and nothing, surely our wine might turn
To a bitter taste.

VANNOZZA

Nay, never, Sancia.
I drink thus pure red wine to all of you.
Have I, who loved and love you, ever praised
You for your beauty, Giovanni — overmuch?
For mine is on the wane.

GIOVANNI

You have praised me beyond
All belief of praise.

VANNOZZA

One gains eternal fame.

CESARE

I pledge you both, now, in the spirit's name.

They drink

SANCIA

How lovely is your vineyard; now the hour
On the sundial points to ten. Night's shadows fall
As ours might on the grass; the crocuses
Like little flames of gold shine. The swift lizards
Leap in delight and flash and vanish away.
Only the wind's restless always in hot June;
And can a man be quiet in his soul
And love the wind?

CESARE

I love the wind and sea,
And I love wine and kisses; and I love blood.

GIOVANNI

Nothing but blood that's blood and wine that's wine
And death that's death: and where do I come in?

CESARE

You come in always as you used to come.

GIOVANNI

With blood before me and with blood behind
As an image out of hell's flames risen to earth
Out of a spirit of sheer mockery?

CESARE

We are not in Spain: and you are not in hell —
Yet; and there are worse things than mere blood-shedding
When death exacts from blood some reckoning
We reek not of that alive. The stain of blood
Flies upward: so I read in a Spanish Tragedy
That deals with sinister matters; now corruption
Stalks in with spell-bound gestures; now the scent
Of graveyard earth stinks in our nostrils; now
A phantom, in a wizard shape, comes dancing
With blood upon the delicate soles of his feet.

GIOVANNI

Sancia, I suffer from the intensity of this heat.
One stifles. I were fain the heavens took fire
And the rain fell like drops of blood. To think
Even of sleeping is as if one asked the owls
To stop their hooting.

CESARE

Sleep may come on you.
I am no owl to beat against your windows
With wings the rain has hurt with drops of blood.

SANCIA

I say to you, the root of hate grows hellward
And from the roots of evil reptiles thrive.

CESARE

I say to you that reptiles always thrive.

VANNOZZA

I tell you here's too much of treasonous malice.
Here, in this very shoal and shore of time,
We'll jump the life to come; imaginings
Beat at our hearts, and present fears are less
Than such uncertain images of things
We know too little of. Let us arise now,
And taste, after our feast, the air of night.
They walk to and fro

CESARE

Mother, I fear it is time for us to leave —
To leave in peace — this place of holy rest.

VANNOZZA

Why go so soon, my son? The air is fresh.

CESARE

The air is fresh. The wind will soon blow shrewdly.

GIOVANNI

I have no haste to hasten back to Rome.

SANCIA

I stay here for the night, with your kind leave,
Vannozza.

VANNOZZA

Certainly, dear child. Yet these must go —
Alas, alas! They must — these sons of mine
Their Holy Father waits for in the Vatican
To bid them both farewell.

CESARE

Alas, dear Mother,
The Pope desired me — ardently — to return
To the Vatican before he takes his rest.

GIOVANNI

His rest? Sleep sound he may — sleep he may not.

CESARE

I am quite certain you shall sleep to-night.

GIOVANNI

I have no hope at all to sleep to-night.

CESARE

I catch your meaning. Let our mules be harnessed.

VANNOZZA

I see they are both harnessed at the gate.

CESARE

Wish us good-night, for we must both be gone.

VANNOZZA

Good-night, Cesare; good-night, Giovanni mine.
They embrace
Cesare, who is that hooded man I see
Behind the mule-guides?

CESARE

You need not fear
A man whose face is masked. He comes at nights
When I am — not in the Vatican. Good-night.

GIOVANNI [*aside*]

Cesare, you must leave me at the Cesarini.

CESARE [*aside*]

A palace named after me? That's sinister.
Leave you I shall; my way lies not your way;
For I must go to the Piazza degli Ebrei
To pray some damned soul shirks not his own Hell.
Exeunt

SCENE SIX

A Square in the Trastavere

Enter MICHELOTTO *with* TWO ASSASSINS

MICHELOTTO

The hour is after midnight, not death's hour
Sounds yet, and there are ghosts that mope in Hell,
And Satan stalks in Rome and goblins laugh
From the house-roofs. Perdition awaits us if —

FIRST ASSASSIN

Tremendous If? Why, in the devil's name,
Have you brought us here?

MICHELOTTO

To do a sinister deed.

SECOND ASSASSIN

A storm of ghosts to give us ghostly aid?
That shall make men shudder in their very graves;
There shall be blood on the untimely lips of Death
And a certain dusty hunger in his bones.
The deed, you ask? A deed that has no name,
Yet has a name. In the name of toad-stools, what?

MICHELOTTO

Something less harsh than murder; nay, a deed
That has no shape of breath; nay, not the wind
Can shape it to its purpose.

FIRST ASSASSIN

Our purposes
Are plain and simple. We know many a trick;
We know your name; we have entered in your pay;
Here we three are: and there the Tiber crawls.

MICHELOTTO

And there the Tiber crawls. We are but three,
And soon shall come a fourth. I am an Artist
In the fine art one names the Art of Slaying. You
Are less than slaves.

SECOND ASSASSIN

So you may think of us.
It seems there's here a kind of perfidy,
A thing that has a mask on, an apology
For Vice.

MICHELOTTO

You seem to grasp my meaning. What's Vice
But Vice, and that's perfidious, as one's death?
Time's up, by the moon's shadow: how time slips
Under one's feet! Brats have grown into whores.
It is a whoremonger you have to slay.

FIRST ASSASSIN

The lordliest whoremonger that lives in Rome?

MICHELOTTO

The lordliest.

SECOND ASSASSIN

There is no wind at all in this fierce heat;
The air we breathe is hell's; my knife wants sharpening.

MICHELOTTO

You see that house with the white balconies,
Two windows open and the other shut —
Rough whitewood shutters, silent as blind death —
Where someone sleeps and someone wakes (no angels,
No angel ever sleeps) that not the dawn
Yet flares on, blood-red-weaponed out of heaven —
Where lives a woman with olive skin, black eyes,
A morbid languid Asiatic creature
Who gives, not sells, her body?

SECOND ASSASSIN

That naked house?

MICHELOTTO

Yes. Behind it stands
The ancient Basilica of Santa Maria
In Trastavere, delicate in desolation;
And beyond that, the Tiber.

FIRST ASSASSIN

One ought to know it!
The refuse of the filthiest part of the city
Lies on its banks abandoned; a muddy river,
An ugly yellow river.

MICHELOTTO

There you will have to swing the man you have slain
Into the depths where slime is crawling.

FIRST ASSASSIN [*showing his knife he has sharpened*]

The first man
That opens yonder door, and comes with wine
And lust after his limbs have danced all night
Into the street where none hold Carnival?

MICHELOTTO

The same. He will have played dice on the harlot's bed
Desiring to divine his future. This
Shall he divine to-night.

Exit

SECOND ASSASSIN

Hanged Judas' price
Of Blood, that's all our hell-hound, Don Michele
Michelotto, gave us. Destruction take his throat
When next he pays assassins!

FIRST ASSASSIN

Do you know her name,
Hers, who lives there?

SECOND ASSASSIN

No.

FIRST ASSASSIN

Imperia, a Lamia, a strange snake-woman,
Some call a Vampire.

SECOND ASSASSIN

You mean dead-living creatures that rise from graves
At midnight and suck the blood out of one's veins
And grow the lovelier for the taste of blood?

FIRST ASSASSIN

Those that she slays turn Vampires.

SECOND ASSASSIN

I see a face —
A man's, I think — pass inside the window.

FIRST ASSASSIN

Perhaps a Vampire!

SECOND ASSASSIN

Silence! Listen! Wait in the shade.

The door opens and GIOVANNI, *flushed with wine, comes into the street and shuts the door behind him.*

GIOVANNI [*singing*]

What a lovely thing this youth is,
If but Youth could always stay so!
You'd be happy? Be to-day so,
In to-morrow's tale no truth is.

FIRST ASSASSIN

Sackful of Vices, Pit of Infamy,
There are several deaths by which a man may die.
Look not so pale: there's no escape for you.

GIOVANNI

Your dire looks harbour death. You are mad! Give way!

SECOND ASSASSIN

No other way.

GIOVANNI

O I am trapped, I am trapped!
O fair Night be not fatal to me! In your ear,
You there, I'll give you a heap of golden ducats.

FIRST ASSASSIN [*aside to* SECOND]

Were he the Pope's Son, now, we'd give him life.

GIOVANNI

Let not gush forth my blood! O spare my life
Or you'll be damned forever. I am the Son —

SECOND ASSASSIN

Here's a fine drug for you —

They stab him

GIOVANNI

A spirit of hell
Has turned hell's gate back for me.

He falls

O God, God,
Be not pitiful!

Dies

FIRST ASSASSIN

May God have mercy on him!

SECOND ASSASSIN

The man we have slain was innocent of blood:
We keep the taint of it on ours. Come now
Lift up his head, I will lift up his heels.

Before they have raised him IMPERIA *rushes out and falls on her knees beside the body of* GIOVANNI.

IMPERIA

What have they done to you, Giovanni? What have they done?
Giovanni, Giovanni, they have killed the heart that was mine!

The curtain falls

SCENE SEVEN

The Vatican

Enter THE POPE *and* CESARE BORGIA

THE POPE

For seven whole days and nights (such nights that slay
The soul) I was alone as God might be
On His throne lonely; sleeping not, one thought
In my mind always (a thought to make one mad)
Beat in the hollow corners of my brain
And drove me into curses dread and deep
And direr imprecations that howled in the air
As the wolves howl that hunger, thirst for prey:
I was, was not, myself.

CESARE

You are alive,
Giovanni's dead, and what is Rome is hell.
I have confessed to you the deed I did not do,
That had it done; for vengeance in my spirit
Hurled me against the fiery gates where Satan
Waits, hurled me back, not in the name of God.

THE POPE

Name not God's name. An eternity has passed
From the instant when I saw, dead, the adored
Dear body of my son — the blood washed clean,
Alas, of his nine wounds — whereon my senses
Left me and I fell —

CESARE

As Dante, Sire, in hell
After Francesca had sighed out the last
Sob of her tragic heart, whirled on by flame —

THE POPE

— Fell and was dead, dead to awake to life,
And, living, to have had your breath on mine
And heard your accursed lips that dared not lie
Smite mine.

CESARE

I smote you not. I smote with words
Your lips that loathed me.

THE POPE

Cesare, if flesh is blood
And blood is flesh, this that was veritable man
Is now no longer man nor veritable.
But what is veritable is the naked fact
That we who have talked one hour over what is
Both flesh and blood are not heartless as his heart
Now silenced: yet he is as absent from us now
As we are from God's thought, we who have passed
Out of his death-chamber: and we, even as he,
Shall get no answer from a dead man's lips.

CESARE

You have spent your curses on me. Curse yourself,
Who have need of curses. Loveless are we now,
That have to live, and live down hate and love.

THE POPE

Blood of my blood you are and of Vannozza's,
And therefore are you a devil not yet damned
No absolution ever can absolve:
For what is absolution if I give it
To one who sets his right foot on my throne
And might, one night, set foot upon my face?

CESARE

I might, one night, set foot upon your throne.

THE POPE

I have been monstrous, you have overpassed me;
I have been perverse, always — Your perversion
Conceives against me and for me vast conceptions
Most terrible and unholy and atrocious —
Because you are my son. Yea, you have helped me —
Because you are my son. Son, if you slay me —
There's still one reason — because you are my son.

CESARE

Because I am your son, I shall not slay you.
Because you are my father, who shall slay you?
The question of the slaying of a Sire
Is out of my conception. Of you begotten
And of Vannozza conceived, I am not yours
Wholly, nor hers: and therefore I have chosen
The one course left me. I live. Giovanni's dead.

THE POPE

Yea, one lies dead, who had a right to live,
And one stands living, who had the right to die.

CESARE

Who had the right to live. Nay, all your curses
Shall give not the dead back life; nor give me, living,
The right to smite you with curses. There's an end
Of all things, not of this thing, that lies beneath us.
Wounds have no words: he shall not speak again.

THE POPE

You say it, you whose hands are not clean of blood.

CESARE

Are your hands clean?

THE POPE

They taste of blood.

CESARE

Do mine?

THE POPE

Mine shall taste always of blood. Have we not felt it?

CESARE

Yes, we have felt it, and the taste remains.

THE POPE

Always to be haunted by the smell of blood?

CESARE

Mere physical disgust and that wears off.
There's an intense intoxication in a crime

That is not wine's intoxication, but the revenge
Of heated blood against heated blood: a thing,
I say, that has no more meaning than a word
The lip lets slip; only, if someone slips,
The other follows.

He makes the gesture

THE POPE

The God that made us evil
Did that irrevocably; for, as we make ourselves,
Ourselves can be unmade; what's good in us
Comes not of our own goodness. Lucrezia
Has the evil of her beauty made as a snare
For men's souls. But — as for the one soul that's fled?

CESARE

Ask of the Great, ask not of me, Sire Father!

THE POPE

As the wind wavers a man — as Judas swings
Forever on a pale wild olive bough
Where Satan tempts him everlastingly
And begs from him his soul he cannot give
Because its thirst can never be extinguished —
I might be hung between the Sun and Moon
And see the clouds scowl, hear the winds blow,
The owls that shriek, the minutes as they go,
And, with distracted countenance, still live on
Who saw God made and eaten all day long
And blessed the world; and never see my Son,
Giovanni. Well, what recompense for that?

CESARE

None, Sire. It is I that keep the shame of it.
We have drunk deep of our impurity,
And there's but one most certain dining-time
Betwixt us and confusion; and then waste.
For Malice waits on us with her stooped brows,
And time's eternal motion will not stay
One instant for our sakes. And she may come,
Lucrezia, she must come; and with her bring
I know not what — what all the burning waters
Of the wide seas' conflagration might present
To our unrepining spirits.

THE POPE

She will come
And with her all the beauty of the world.
I dare not breathe; the air grows heavy. My senses
Are terrible to contend with. Let not my feet
Stagger, O God, into the abyss of hell!

CESARE

Sire, be not sinister. The Gods forbid
We take them sinister-wise; such knavery
Is ever unrewarded. He that is proud
Eats up himself: that's an old proverb; we
Are no food fit for the Gods. Our generation
Breeds vipers; there is more subtle craft in love
Than love in craft. Nights are too brief; our taste
Is violent and for things most violent.

THE POPE

Out of such violence comes more violence,
As when a beast is wild and frenzy seizes

His hungry eyes, so that he bites the ground
And paws the earth up; so, if my God forgets me,
Let him forget the beast that's in me!

CESARE

God forbid!
We are no such beasts, but very subtle serpents,
Inextricably coiled, that cling and sting
And hate and hiss.

THE POPE

Not all eternity
Shall eat up all these hours.

CESARE

Not even the hunger
That gnaws the edges of Eternity
Shall give Lucrezia what's beyond all hunger:
The gift of the vision of the fall of the Axe of Fate.

Enter LUCREZIA *in wild excitement*

LUCREZIA

I have seen Giovanni! Give me wine to drink!

CESARE

Here's wine.

LUCREZIA

No, no, there's red blood in the cup,
And if I taste it, I shall surely die.

THE POPE

Giovanni and alive?

LUCREZIA

Yea, in my room,
Alive and wounded. Never a word said he
But showed me all his wounds; one on his throat
His left hand touched. I saw all the red stains,
But not the blood. He wavered and was gone.

CESARE

His violent spirit tried to outride the wind.
I am the hinge of the gate that opens Hell
And is he not the key that locks the Gate?

LUCREZIA

You slew him!

CESARE

Nay, I slew him not, Lucrezia.

LUCREZIA

You lie to me, Cesare: you have always lied,
You always will lie. You are ravenous with the thirst
Of blood you live for, and blood's not all. Seven devils
Take you! If ever I believe in you again,
Let seven devils take me! I have seen hell's fire
In my room. I have seen blood on Giovanni's bosom,
Blood on his mouth, and still you cry for his blood!

CESARE

I swear on the black Crucifix that hangs there —
There on the wall, that all souls kneel before —
That I lie not.

LUCREZIA

I tell you that you lie,
Lie in your throat. If he should enter here!
I think you are mad that will not answer me.

THE POPE

Child, I have given Giovanni absolution
But never as one gives it to the living.

CESARE

I am the hinge of the Gate that opens Hell.

LUCREZIA *puts her hand to her forehead, and gazes on them wildly, as the Curtain falls.*

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

The scene represents a room in the Palace of DUKE JOVELIN OF BRITTANY, *with a door on the right and at the back a window overlooking the sea. On the right,* ISEULT OF BRITTANY *sits at an embroidery-frame, with three of her ladies,* YGRAINE, ELAINE, *and* IMOGEN.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

How can I think of Tristan while I sit
And sew these idle flowers into a field?
Tristan is fighting for his life, he plucks
The harp-strings in a lady's chamber, sings
Of battles or of love that fights in hearts
Wherever hearts are gentle. Where he is,
There life is; and I sew my idle flowers
Among their grasses, and I do not live.

YGRAINE

Lady, when women live there is an end
Of peace in life: it were as well we loved.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Would you not love to love?

YGRAINE

I have loved, madam.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Is this an answer?

YGRAINE

I have no other one
Can say so much in little.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

When you loved
Had you no joy then?

YGRAINE

When I loved I had
The bitter joy to know I loved a man.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

And evil came of it?

YGRAINE

Evil it was.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

I could love well, and yet be happy. Some
Ask such a great and heavy deal of Love:
He cannot make all happy overmuch.
But I would build up the live air with peace
About a quiet nesting-place for love.

YGRAINE

He will not nest, but he will fly abroad
Until the waters are loud under him.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY [*to* ELAINE]

Look out, and tell me if the sea by now
Has lapped the seaweed off the sand?

ELAINE [*rising and going to the window*]

The sea
Is thin and grey and wrinkled and speaks low.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

It speaks to me of Cornwall. I would be
Again in Cornwall. There the iron rocks
Are always white with foam, and there the wind
Talks with the sea in caverns underground.

YGRAINE

The demons of the sea have ancient homes
In Cornwall, and their names are like our names;
We worshipped the same gods before they died.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

The Irish Iseult worships the old gods
Within her heart, and only with her lips
Prays by the name of Christ. She has a mind
More manly-hearted than a man's. And now
She is the queen of Cornwall.

ELAINE

She was made
To be a queen.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Ah! you have seen her?

YGRAINE

Once;
In Ireland: all the women of her isle
Are fiercer than our women, but in her
There is the majesty of cruel beasts.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Could she be cruel?

YGRAINE

As a noble beast;
Not crafty, not for less than hate or death.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

My thread is knotted; pray you, take the frame
She rises, and moves to the window, where she sits down.
I will work no longer. Will you sing to me?

IMOGEN

What shall I sing?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

The song that Tristan made
When he was wounded, and, being like to die,
Put all his pain, to ease it, in a song.

IMOGEN [*sings*]

If this be love I die,
I die of hoping love,
That will not hence remove,
Nor will not all deny.

His sharp and bitter dart
Is fast within my side;
Come, my old courage, hide
Thy death within thy heart.

I will not shrink although
This death in love there be:
She whom I love is she
Who is through love my foe.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A bitter and proud song, a lying song;
It is not love nor any woman born
That is so cruel to a man. I think
A man may be so if one loves a man.

YGRAINE

Have I not said it, lady?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Yet I think
Tristan could love.

ELAINE

He had an eager face;
His eyes were swifter than a falcon's flight
After a heron startled from the reeds
Till a cloud hides him.

YGRAINE

Tristan could love well.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Why am I lonely when I think of him?
I would that I had never gone to Cornwall.
And yet I would not. Tristan is my foe,
As the song says, because I could have loved him.
And now I send my heart out in weak sighs,
Sewing them in with stitches, plaiting them
Into a mere song's pattern, and I hear
Nothing but my heart sighing in the wind,
And in the sea that only used to sigh
For its own old forgotten loneliness.
The Irish Iseult, if she loved a man,
Would take him with her little warrior's hands
Out of a field of fighters; she would walk
Through blood, yes, through her mother's feud of blood
To Tristan, if she loved him; as indeed
She hates him more than any man on earth.

ELAINE

Iseult of the White Hands is not so fierce
To snatch her joy out of unwilling hands.
Yet can she wait, and there is not a joy
Which may not come to patience.

The door opens, and an ATTENDANT *enters.*

ATTENDANT

Madam, the Duke.

The old DUKE *comes in. He goes up to his daughter*
The MAIDS *go out, one by one.*

DUKE

Peace to my daughter.

He sits down beside her

Is it peace with you?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Father, I have forgotten where peace dwells.

DUKE

Why here, my child, if you but stay at home
And furnish a guest-chamber in your heart.
I am an old man, I have suffered loss
Of well-nigh all a man can have to lose,
Yet peace has never left me. Enemies
Have torn my castles out of these weak hands,
Harried my fields and farms, my people are
My people now no longer; yet I still
Sit by my fireside, while these walls are mine,
And talk with peace. I am old, you are young:
The young have many wants, as infants have,
Who want the stars, the brightness of sharp swords,
The burning rose of fire. What troubles you?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Father, the oldest trouble in the world.
She rises from her seat and sits on a stool at his feet.

DUKE

Ah, this is the first trouble of young maids,
Before they learn what grief is. I have lived
So long, and it has always been the same.
Who is the man my daughter loves?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A knight
Who is the bravest knight in all the world.

DUKE

What is his name?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Tristan.

DUKE

A noble name,
I have heard only honour of the name;
If he were here, his sword would gain my cause.
Does Tristan know that Iseult loves him?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

No.
I have but spoken with him twice or thrice,
In Cornwall; I have looked upon his face;
He knows me not from any other maid.

DUKE

He has not spoken love to you?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

O no.
He is in Cornwall, as I think; he serves
Mark and my cousin Iseult; but alas,
She hates him for her mother's feud of blood.

DUKE

They tell me there are women of that land
Fairer than other women; it may be
That Tristan loves some lady of the court.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

It may well be.

DUKE

And yet?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

And yet I love
Tristan, and I could take him to my arms
Even out of another woman's arms.

DUKE

My child, if this be so, and this is so,
There is a power, I think, in patient love,
Love draws its own unto itself, although
The whole strewn world, violently opposed,
Lie like a chasm between. I have seen hope
Wrench its fulfilment from the grasp of things;
And love is power, and hope is only sight.
There is no witchcraft that can draw a man
Like a weak woman's love, when that can wait
And never waver. Can you wait?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

As those
That wait for morning.

DUKE

Yet if you would live
Your very life, hope without fear, and will
Without foreboding. Life is in to-day,
Yesterday and to-morrow are but words,

And all despair and fear and melancholy
Are shadows of that shadow. Cast away
Remembrance, and the fear of things to come,
And live between the dawn and sunsetting;
So shall desire die or be satisfied,
So shall all things live out their hour, and die,
So shall the world be constant to its change.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

Father, there is no surety in the world.

DUKE

Then trust the world no more; trust your own soul,
That makes the world as you would have the world.

IMOGEN [*from outside*]

If this be love I die,
I die of hoping love.

DUKE

What is that song?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A song that Tristan made.

ELAINE AND IMOGEN [*outside*]

If this be love I die,
I die of hoping love,
That will not hence remove,
Nor will not all deny.

DUKE

Come, let us follow where these voices are.

He takes ISEULT *by the hand, and they go out together.*

THE TOY CART

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

DECOR

"There is your majesty at dice with the queen: behind you stands one damsel with the betel box, whilst another is waving the chounri over your head: the dwarf is playing with the monkey, and the parrot abusing the buffoon."

FOUNDED ON THE MRICHCHHAKATI OF SUDRAKA

COSTUMES

WOMEN

Waist decorated with tinkling bells; anklets of silver, large ear-rings set with pearls, bodice buttoned below the waist with gems; forehead stained with saffron, silver chains on the feet, on the forehead a mark brighter than the new moon; dress embroidered with the buds of the lotus; saffron-dyed vest; string of cowries round the neck, lips ruddy with betel; forehead marked with a saffron crescent.

MENDICANTS

Rosary in the hand, forehead stained with sandal, wallet at the side covered with black deer skin, vestments dyed in ochre, bamboo staves, long beards. Readers of the Puranas, carrying under their arms the sacred volumes wrapped up in the cloth on which they take their seat.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

CHARADUTTA, *a Brahmin*
ROHASENA, *his son*
MAITREYA, *a Brahmin, his friend*
SAMSTHANAKA, *the brother-in-law of the king*
THREE GAMBLERS
THE JUDGE
THE PROVOST
THE RECORDER
TWO CHANDALAS (*public executioners*)
A MENDICANT FRIAR
THE SERVANT OF CHARADUTTA
VASANTASENA, *a dancer*
RAMBHA, *her mother*
HER MAID
MAID-SERVANT *in Charadutta's house*
CROWD, ATTENDANTS, GUARDS

THE SCENE *takes place in the city of Ujjayin, in the Western part of India*

THE TOY CART

ACT I

A room in CHARADUTTA'S *house, poorly furnished, with a few books and musical instruments, a drum, a tabor, a lute, and piper, lying about. At the back is a door opening into an outer court or garden, with a wall visible at the back, beyond which is the street. The outer door is not seen. There is a curtained door at the side of the room, leading into the inner part of the house.*

CHARADUTTA

Rebhila sang exquisitely! And as for his lute, it is a sea-pearl; it was more comfortable to my heart than a friend consoling a friend for the absence of the beloved; it had a voice like the very voice of love.

MAITREYA

Well, well, for my part I am very thankful to be out of it. [*He sits down, as if tired.*]

CHARADUTTA

Rebhila surpassed himself.

MAITREYA

Now, there are two things that I can never help laughing at: A woman reading Sanskrit and a man singing

a song. The woman snuffles like a young cow when the rope is first passed through her nostrils, and the man wheezes like an old pandit who has been saying his beads till the flowers of his chaplet are as dry as his throat; and the one seems to me as ridiculous as the other.

CHARADUTTA

Is it possible that you did not admire Rebhila's marvellous skill? His voice was at once so sweet and so passionate, so flowing and yet so precise, so full of the ecstasy of delight, that I half fancied I was listening to a woman whom I could not see. And now, though the music is over, I can still hear the voice and the lute, the hurrying, rising, sinking, the pause and return of the wandering melody.

MAITREYA

The dogs were all asleep in the streets as we came back. They were wiser than we. [SERVANT *enters.*] Here, Vardhamana, tell Radanika to bring water and wash the master's feet.

CHARADUTTA

No, do not call her: she will be looking after the child.

SERVANT

I'll bring the water, sir, and Maitreya here can wash your feet.

MAITREYA

Do you hear this son of a slave? *He* to bring the water, and *I*, who am a Brahmin, to wash your feet!

CHARADUTTA

Well, my friend, take the water, and leave him to do the rest.

SERVANT

Come, Mr. Maitreya, pour out the water. [*He washes* CHARADUTTA'S *feet and is going.*]

CHARADUTTA

Stay, Vardhamana, wash the feet of the Brahmin.

MAITREYA

Never mind; it is of little use; I must soon be off tramping again, like a beaten ass.

SERVANT

Are you a Brahmin, Mr. Maitreya?

MAITREYA

I am a Brahmin among Brahmins, as the python is a serpent among serpents.

SERVANT

Well, in that case I will wash your feet. [*Washes them and goes out.*]

MAITREYA

My very good Charadutta, do you want to know why that music went straight to your head, and has kept you ever since in the shadow of an intoxication?

CHARADUTTA

The music, and the memory of it.

MAITREYA

Memory, that is it: it reminds you of Vasantasena.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena!

MAITREYA

You need not echo her name like that. Was I not with you in the garden of the temple of Kamadeva, and did you not see her, covered with gold upon gold, jingling with bracelets and anklets, like the chief actress in a new play? And what is more, did she not see you, and did she see anyone else after she had seen you?

CHARADUTTA

I must not think of her, Maitreya; and indeed I have no intention of thinking of her any more.

MAITREYA

Then hear no more music, offer up rice to the gods. [*He looks out of the window.*] Here are a few small birds picking at three seeds in the garden; there used to be storks and swans there, and enough food for them; and forget all women, I say, forget all women.

CHARADUTTA

While Rohasena lives, how can I forget women? I love no living woman as I love the child of my dead wife.

MAITREYA

Perhaps not, but 'tis of a very different kind of love I am thinking. Vasantasena is a courtesan, and

though she were the best dancer on hearts in the kingdom, and a woman of true religion, and loving to her lovers (and I neither say nor unsay any part of it), yet I would have you beware of her, and for a good round dozen of reasons.

CHARADUTTA

You are mistaken, Maitreya, both in her and in me; but you may give me your reasons.

MAITREYA

Well now, take myself. I can quite well remember in old days when I used to sit here, where we now are, but on cushions, where they now are not, and eating scented dishes until I could eat no more, like a city bull in the market-place. Now I wander about from house to house like a tame pigeon, to pick up what crumbs I can find.

CHARADUTTA

Forgive me, friend of all seasons; you are always welcome, and to my best; but it is my sorrow that I cannot now feast my friends as I did before.

MAITREYA

They feasted you out of house and home. You have a royal heart, Charadutta, and you kept a king's kitchen.

CHARADUTTA

Then it was not only my own doing, it was the loss of the royal favour.

MAITREYA

Well, you see where your friends and the present king (may his reign be brief and happy!) have brought you.

CHARADUTTA

Death would be better. Have you seen how all my friends desert me, Maitreya?

MAITREYA

Like a cowboy, who drives his herd from place to place in the thicket, always in search of fresh pasture.

CHARADUTTA

To be poor is like dying slowly. But what has all this to do with Vasantasena?

MAITREYA

A very great deal. Do you know that at the house of Vasantasena the porter dozes in a big chair, as stately as a Brahmin deep in the Vedas; and the very crows, crammed with rice and curds, disdain the rice thrown to the gods?

CHARADUTTA

And if so?

MAITREYA [*more and more rapidly*]

The kitchen smells like the heaven of Indra, and the gateway, they tell me, to the inner court is like the bow of Indra in the sky. There are jewellers setting pearls and sapphires and rubies and topazes and other jewels; they cut lapis lazuli, polish coral, squeeze out

sandal juice, and dry saffron; and there are men and women laughing and singing, and chewing musk and betel, and drinking wine; and quails fight, and partridges cry, and cranes stalk about the court, and peacocks dance on the grass and wave their jewelled tails like fans, and in the midst of them, like the mistress of Indra's garden, is Vasantasena!

CHARADUTTA

Whether you speak on your own knowledge or on hearsay, I do not see how all this concerns me, or the least of your twelve good reasons.

MAITREYA

You have said it; you said it is better to die than to be poor. My first reason, then, and a sufficient reason, is this, that, as there is no lotus that has not a stalk, no trader that is not a cheat, no goldsmith that is not a thief, and no village meeting without a quarrel, so there never will be a woman of that profession of love that does not love gold first.

CHARADUTTA

There at least you are wrong. The beggars at all the gates of the city have blessed her: I listen to their voices. But enough of this, I have more serious matters to tell you of.

MAITREYA

All men are fools, and all women are like fortune, that is as sliding and slippery as a serpent. O, the folly of men, that will not know that a woman laughs

money and cries money, and is altogether money, and that she squeezes a man like colour from a bag till he is drained dry, and then casts him out into any corner of the field.

CHARADUTTA

You think evil of women, because, it may be, you have known evil women. Such there are, and I pity them, because, having no souls for the life to come, they have not made for themselves delicate shadows of souls for the adornment of this present life. But you are right: I am too poor to be in any danger from this fair lady, not because she would come to me for gold, but because I should desire to cover her wrists and her ankles with fine gold. If I have heard rightly of her, she would give gold rather than take it.

MAITREYA

Heaven send her to your house with only a few pounds. weight of the gold and jewels she carries upon her person.

CHARADUTTA

Maitreya, this is unseemly. I tell you I have other matters to talk of, dangers, or perhaps hopes, that are now in men's minds. What do you think of the chances of Aryaka the cowherd against those of Pulaka the king?

MAITREYA

Aryaka has a prophet behind him, Pulaka only a throne. Yet a throne is stable, until many men overturn it.

CHARADUTTA

Many men are pledged to overturn the throne of Pulaka.

MAITREYA

Here at least is one shoulder for the occasion.

CHARADUTTA

Is that meant for a word or a deed?

MAITREYA

Try me.

CHARADUTTA

I will try you. Will you share a secret with me?

MAITREYA

Give me half then.

CHARADUTTA

You must bear half of the burden. I am in the counsels of Aryaka.

MAITREYA

I knew it. Why did you not trust me sooner?

CHARADUTTA

You know, then, that he is to escape from prison?

MAITREYA

Is it so? When?

CHARADUTTA

To-morrow or the day after. His followers await him outside the gates.

MAITREYA

To escape from prison is hard enough, but not so hard as to get through the city gates.

CHARADUTTA

Have I not free passage at every gate? Is my carriage ever detained or examined?

MAITREYA

Ah! you will send him in your carriage.

CHARADUTTA

I will take him in my carriage, and you will be with me. They will say at the gate: "That is Charadutta in his carriage with his friend Maitreya." No one will stop us. Once outside the gate he is among friends. Then we will return quietly. Will you come with me?

MAITREYA

I would come with you to the cross-roads by the southern cemetery, beyond which no man goes with his head on his shoulders.

CHARADUTTA

We risk no less.

MAITREYA

Go on.

CHARADUTTA

A messenger brings me word when he is out of prison, and where he is, there my coachman finds himself by precise accident, not knowing why. Promise me your help and your silence.

MAITREYA

My help and my silence are yours. Why who knows, if the cowherd becomes king, Maitreya may creep into comfort at a cow's tail.

CHARADUTTA

Aryaka will not fail. He will bring us freedom, and is not freedom more than all things?

MAITREYA

Can you say that?

CHARADUTTA

Why not?

MAITREYA

More than women and music? Why, your whole soul was filled with Vasantasena a minute ago, and will be filled with her again next minute.

CHARADUTTA

Do you think so? I do not think any woman will ever come between me and my duty.

MAITREYA

If Aryaka has many such followers he will not fail. Pulaka has none. His friends leave Pulaka daily, and not so much for love of one or the other as for hatred of the king's brother-in-law, Prince Samsthanaka.

CHARADUTTA

If there is any man in the kingdom I would be least willing to welcome in my house, that is the man.

MAITREYA

Do you take him to be your enemy?

CHARADUTTA

I take him to be every honest man's enemy, and I could hope he has made no exception of me.

MAITREYA

They say he is madly in love with Vasantasena, and that she will not suffer the odour of his cloak within three leagues of her nostrils.

CHARADUTTA

He is not only a terror to honest men, because he is afraid of the scabbard of his own sword; but women fear him because he is not ashamed that they should be afraid. Listen! What was that? A cry?

MAITREYA

It was nothing; the high road at this time of the evening is a-swarm with all sorts of loose persons, courtiers, and cut-throats. Let them all go their own way to destruction.

CHARADUTTA

That is an evil wish, and may bring us misfortune. Listen! Someone is knocking at the door.

Sounds of hubbub are heard from the street, cries and scuffling. Then a knocking. CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *have both risen.* MAITREYA *opens the door and looks out.*

MAITREYA

Vardhamana is opening the door. Someone wants to come in. He tries to shut the door. It is pushed open. It is a woman, I can hear the sound of her anklets. She is richly dressed and covered with jewels.

CHARADUTTA

A woman, richly dressed, why does she seek to enter my house?

MAITREYA

I will call to her not to come in. She is running through the court.

He starts and falls back from the door as a woman comes hurriedly forward and stands on the threshold, veiled, and with her head bowed in an attitude of humility.

VASANTASENA

Master, forgive me! *A long pause*

CHARADUTTA [*in a stifled voice*]

Vasantasena!

MAITREYA [*to someone without*]

No, no, not you, too!

A puffing and blowing is heard, and an immense woman, leaning on a stick, thrusts herself in, past MAITREYA *and* VASANTASENA.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena, indeed! Don't pretend that you don't know who it is. Who else should it be? Oh! my

poor breath, who else would spend the last breath of her poor old mother with running about the streets at night, and without her attendants, and at the time of the evening when all the bad, wicked people are abroad on the king's highway! But indeed his Royal Highness, if the girl could but see with the eyes of wisdom, her mother's eyes, I would say. . . .

MAITREYA [*at the door*]

They are all coming into the garden. It is the prince. I will go out and tell him what I think of him. [*He snatches up a stick and goes out. Noise of voices is heard.*]

CHARADUTTA [*coming forward*]

Honoured guests, my house is yours. If it is too humble for your entertainment, it is at least a safe shelter against those who have dared to molest you. Deign to enter and be seated.

RAMBHA

You would come, Vasantasena; now won't you go in and sit down? I told you the prince meant no harm; it was only his way of showing his uncontrollable passion, and the uncontrollable passion of a great prince is a great honour. Thank you, sir, I will sit down with pleasure. [*She sits down heavily and painfully.*]

VASANTASENA *moves forward and stands beside her*

And I suppose you have frightened away the prince for good and all.

MAITREYA [*outside the door*]

Not a step further, or you measure your sword against my stick.

SAMSTHANAKA [*without*]

Who has got my sword? No, don't take it out of its sheath.

MAITREYA [*backing to the door*]

Not a step further.

CHARADUTTA [*calls*]

Maitreya, give way! [*He goes forward.*] My lord, all guests are welcome to my house, who enter it in peace.

SAMSTHANAKA [*without*]

Stand back, all of you; not a step further. I go alone. [*He appears, extravagantly and awkwardly overdressed, carrying his heavy sword. He disregards* CHARADUTTA, *and holds out his hands towards* VASANTASENA.] Vasantasena!

RAMBHA

His Royal Highness is speaking to you.

SAMSTHANAKA

Why have you fled away from me, Vasantasena, like the deer from the hunter? But it is I that am hunted; all the dogs of the god of love are upon me. Why have you fled from me? You and sleep have fled from me together, and I dream by day, and if I see you, you flee away from me like a dream when one awakens.

RAMBHA

The prince is speaking to you, Vasantasena.

SAMSTHANAKA

Why have you fled from me like a peacock when her tail is in full feather in summer, and like a crane when she hears the thunder in the clouds, and like a jackal hunted by dogs? Your feet that were made for dancing have fled swiftly, like a snake from the king of the birds. I could outstrip the wind in its course, and shall I not overtake so delicate a flyer? Your ear-rings tinkled at your ears like a lute played swiftly by a master. But I have come upon you, and no man can take you out of my power.

CHARADUTTA

My lord!

SAMSTHANAKA

The king, Vasantasena, is my brother-in-law; the king will do anything that I ask of him; he will give me any of his treasures; you have only to ask of me, and I will give you everything you want.

RAMBHA

Do you hear that, Vasantasena? Listen to what he is saying, my daughter.

SAMSTHANAKA

How is it that I, who am the king's brother-in-law, have to beg and not to command? How have you turned your eyes from my face, which is as the sun

upon the face of the master of this house, which is as the moon in her last quarter? And you, sir, if you will deliver this woman into my hands, without dispute, her delivery shall be rewarded with my most particular regard; but if you will not, then count upon my eternal and exterminating enmity.

VASANTASENA *turns and looks at* CHARADUTTA

CHARADUTTA

My lord, you have honoured me with your presence in my humble abode; be pleased to remove your shadow from my door. It is too protracted an honour.

SAMSTHANAKA [*retreating*]

The dog is disloyal. He shall suffer for it. Sir, no haste. [*He retreats.*]

MAITREYA *comes towards him from the side with a threatening aspect.*

Vasantasena, what have you done to me? You have bewitched me.

RAMBHA [*hobbling after him*]

Stop, stop, kind sir. She is not in her proper mind. If you will only listen to me, my lord!

MAITREYA [*to* SAMSTHANAKA]

Have you any more speeches to make?

SAMSTHANAKA [*looking at him with contempt*]

I do not see you. Wait, Vasantasena!

He goes out, followed by RAMBHA, *who plucks at his sleeve, and by* MAITREYA, *who stops outside the door.*

VASANTASENA [*dropping on her knees before* CHARADUTTA]

You have saved more than my life.

CHARADUTTA

I have but opened my door. It is you who have come in, and you are Vasantasena, you have brought the spring, like an army with banners.

VASANTASENA

I am unworthy to come under your roof.

CHARADUTTA

It is because I made an offering this morning to my household gods that they have brought you under it.

VASANTASENA

I have found safety, but to remain longer would be too dangerous for me.

CHARADUTTA

My poverty is my safeguard.

VASANTASENA

Alas! sir, I would that it sheltered you not.

MAITREYA [*at the door*]

Yes, if you have done whispering to your fine prince, and can leave his company for ours, come in, madam.

They both come in, and RAMBHA *stands talking to* MAITREYA, *and then hobbles back to* VASANTASENA.

RAMBHA

Why cannot all folks live peaceably with one another? I, who am no longer in my first youth and full maturity of beauty, have in my time known many men, and some of them princes; but never have two men come to blows in my name! Conciliate them, I say to my daughter, conciliate them all: one never knows who may be king to-morrow. Vasantasena, the good excellent prince has gone away in a great rage, and I know not what he would have done if I had not followed and spoken peaceably to him. Oh! we are all undone, and it is this kind gentleman who took us in (the seven mouths of hell chew him up!) that will be the means of bringing trouble upon us.

CHARADUTTA

It is by such princes that kingdoms fall. I am glad to know myself his enemy. But no harm shall come on you. In my house you are safe, and I will not leave you till you are safe in your own house.

RAMBHA

Listen, my daughter, how kind the gentleman is. I think, sir, you have seen better days?

VASANTASENA

Mother!

CHARADUTTA

A better night I have never seen. But I forget my duties. I have but poor entertainment to offer you, but, such as I have — Radanika!

MAID *comes from the inner room, bringing glasses which she offers and then stands in a corner of the room.*

VASANTASENA

Sir, we were on our way homeward, and have stayed too long already.

CHARADUTTA

I pray you, stay.

VASANTASENA

Sir, I pray you, let us go.

MAITREYA

Very pretty on both sides; and whilst you two stand there, nodding your heads to one another like a field of long grass, permit me to bend mine, in the manner of a young camel with stiff knees, and request you will be pleased to hold yourselves upright again.

RAMBHA

A wise fellow. But we must indeed be going.

VASANTASENA

If your friend here would vouchsafe us the defence of his company on our way home.

CHARADUTTA

Maitreya, attend the ladies.

MAITREYA

You will do better to go with them yourself, sir, for I truly fear that these court libertines would have no more respect for my person than dogs have for a meat-offering in the streets.

CHARADUTTA

I will attend them, but meanwhile see that torches are prepared.

MAITREYA

Ho, Vardhamana! [*He comes in.*] Light the torches.

SERVANT

How are they to be lighted without oil?

MAITREYA [*to* CHARADUTTA *aside*]

To say the truth, sir, our torches are like harlots: they shine not in poor men's houses.

CHARADUTTA

Silence! I will go and see to them myself. I crave leave of absence, that I may prepare for your safe conveying. Come with me, Maitreya.

They go out into the court. RAMBHA *gets up and prowls about, looking at everything.*

RAMBHA

Not enough here, my daughter, to look decent on the walls of a kitchen-wench. Poor man, and *this* is what you would come to!

VASANTASENA

Poor man!

From behind the curtain over a door is heard the voice of a child wailing out, "I don't want it," *and throwing something on the ground.*

RAMBHA

A child! [*To the* MAID.] Has your master children?

MAIDSERVANT

One son, madam.

VASANTASENA

Then he is not poor. Oh, let me see him.

The child pushes aside the curtain, and comes in crying and dragging a clay toy-cart by the wheel. MAID *runs up to him.*

MAIDSERVANT

Run away, Rohasena, and play with your cart.

ROHASENA

I don't want *this* cart; it's only clay; I want the gold one.

VASANTASENA

Poor little fellow!

MAIDSERVANT

And where are we to get the gold, my little man? Wait till your father is rich again; then he will buy you a gold one.

ROHASENA

I want a gold one *now*.

VASANTASENA

Come here and kiss me, my child. (*She takes him in her arms and kisses him.*) How like his father he is!

MAIDSERVANT

He is not only like him in face; but is just the same in disposition. He is the sweetest child in the world. His father worships him.

VASANTASENA

Why is he crying? Don't cry, little man. What are you crying for?

ROHASENA

For my cart. I don't want *this* cart.

VASANTASENA

What does he mean?

MAIDSERVANT

Our neighbour's child had a cart of gold, and the child here used to play with it. Now the other has taken it away, and he wants it back. I made him this one of clay, but he keeps saying: "I want the gold one!"

VASANTASENA

Is it not terrible that a child should want anything and not have it? I thought that children had everything that they wanted. And here is a little child who suffers already because another is more fortunate than he is. The fates of men are like water-drops trembling on the leaves of a lotus. But for a child! I did not know there was so much cruelty in the world. Child, child, don't cry, and you shall have a gold cart.

ROHASENA

Radanika, who is this lady? Is she my new mother?

VASANTASENA *looks on the ground in silence.*

MAIDSERVANT

No, no, this isn't your new mother.

ROHASENA

I thought she might be, Radanika; but then how could it be my mother when she wears such fine things?

CHARADUTTA [*outside*]

Radanika! you must come here.

MAIDSERVANT *goes hurriedly into the court.*

VASANTASENA

O, my child, you do not know what pitiful things you are saying. [*Half-laughing and half-crying, takes off her jewels one by one, and holds them up to the child, and then drops them into the toy-cart.*] Here is a little gold chain for you, and I will take this long chain off my neck.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena!

VASANTASENA

Do you see this bracelet? A King of the West gave that to me.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena! the king's bracelet!

VASANTASENA

But I don't care for it: I give it to you. And here is another, that was given me by somebody I loved very much; but I don't care for it any longer. You shall have that too.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena! the bracelet of Rama. Are you beside yourself!

VASANTASENA

Silence, mother! And here is a diamond that came from deep under the earth in Africa, and this pearl was brought up by a diver from a bottomless sea. You shall have them both.

RAMBHA

All our treasures! O, Vasantasena!

VASANTASENA

They are all yours, because you are a child, and Charadutta's, and because you are unhappy. Now I am really your mother.

ROHASENA

Why are you crying? I won't take them, because you are crying.

VASANTASENA

Now, I am not crying any more. Look, now your cart is more beautiful than any gold cart; it is more beautiful than any cart in the world. Go and play now, child.

ROHASENA *and* RADANIKA *go into the inner room.*

RAMBHA

Vasantasena, you are foolish and wicked. You have given away treasures as if they were trinkets. And I know why you have done it.

VASANTASENA [*with sudden severity*]

Mother, you will know nothing. Not a word of this. Hark, they are coming back. I will cover myself with this cloak, it is Charadutta's, it is like a garden of jasmine.

CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *enter with torches.*

CHARADUTTA

We have found but little oil for the torches, but the moon is at the full, and all the stars wait upon Vasantasena.

VASANTASENA *followed by her mother, moves towards the door.* CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *stand with their torches lifted.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

A room in VASANTASENA'S *house, luxuriantly furnished, with an inner door, covered with curtains, leading into the house. A large door on the left leads from the street, through inner courts. Near this door are tables, at one of which three men are playing dice with cowries.*

GAMBLER

No more dice for me! How many times am I to be ruined by this evil fate that shakes out always odd for even and even for odd. A curse on all cowries! [*Throws down the dice.*]

SECOND GAMBLER

It is always the next throw that brings luck.

FIRST GAMBLER

So you say when you have been winning. How am I to pay you if I let you win any more?

SECOND GAMBLER

A gambler asks that! As if this man did not know every cunning short cut to fortune! How many parts have you played already, O player at all games, under all disguises

FIRST GAMBLER

No more dice for me!

SECOND GAMBLER

Dice and women never played any man false, unless the man first played false with dice and women.

FIRST GAMBLER

Where is the man who has never played false with either?

SECOND GAMBLER

I know such a man, and he has lost deeper than any gamester.

FIRST GAMBLER

Who is the man?

SECOND GAMBLER

Charadutta.

THIRD GAMBLER

Charadutta does not need to suffer from dice or women; the gods are against him, and against the gods there is no remedy.

FIRST GAMBLER

What has befallen him?

SECOND GAMBLER

He was the richest man in the city, and now he is penniless and without more than a single friend, who sticks to him like a poor man's dog; he was married, and his wife is dead; he was a good servant to the king, and his place has been taken from him. What dice have ever thrown such a fortune?

THIRD GAMBLER

If I hear rightly, it is his own bounty that has ruined him, and no fault of his. He was eaten up by hungry friends.

SECOND GAMBLER

Is it easier to bear chastisement because one is innocent? Now, if it had been our friend here?

FIRST GAMBLER

I make no pretences, and the gods have little enough need to concern themselves with my doings. What need have they, when I am here, and with you, and with these accursed cowries? And are any of us here except by the aid and for the profit of the old mercenary mother of Vasantasena, the mountainous Rambha?

SECOND GAMBLER

Say nothing against the mother of Vasantasena. But for her, as you say, should we be here? Vasantasena is adorable to all, and it is the mother who chooses and approves of the adorers.

FIRST GAMBLER

Is there anything more foolish in the world than to spend money on Vasantasena? She has never cared for a man in her life, and there is not a man who has seen her dance who would not give his life for her.

THIRD GAMBLER [*to* SECOND GAMBLER]

Except your impeccable Charadutta.

FIRST GAMBLER

I tell you if Vasantasena did but lift the corner of her veil before him, your sober Charadutta, your model of all the virtues (he is wise, he won't dice with you), Charadutta, I say, would be kissing her feet before the veil was safely back over her eyes.

SECOND GAMBLER

Charadutta would die rather than enter this house, or look into the eyes under that veil.

FIRST GAMBLER

What will you wager?

SECOND GAMBLER

Ten suvarnas. Pick up the cowries that you threw on the ground.

GAMBLER *picks up the cowries. At this moment* VASANTASENA'S MAID *looks anxiously through the curtain.*

SECOND GAMBLER

Wait. Here is Mandanika! Perhaps Vasantasena is coming at last. Where is your mistress?

MAID [*coming in*]

That is what I want to know. She is with her mother, and where she has led her mother no one can know. Now it's here, now it's there, always as the whim of the moment takes her. I had to put all her best clothes and her best jewels on her! The gods send her back safe, these late thieving evenings!

FIRST GAMBLER

Has Prince Samsthanaka been here lately?

MAID

Lately? Not a day, not an hour passes but he, or his messengers, or his body-servants with flowers, or his house-servants with heavy baskets, are here waiting for answers that never come.

FIRST GAMBLER

The prince is not used to wait for an answer.

MAID

Here he must learn it then, for Vasantasena will have none of him, though he is next to the king, and a man of great valour and learning.

SECOND GAMBLER

Valour and learning, Mandanika? Who has told you this of him?

MAID

He told me himself. But listen, I hear footsteps. Someone is coming. Is it Vasantasena?

She rushes to the door, which opens, and RAMBHA *comes in, puffing and blowing.*

Where . . .?

RAMBHA

Here, of course. Take her to her room and help her to change her dress.

VASANTASENA, *veiled and closely wrapped in* CHARADUTTA'S *cloak, passes across the stage, and goes in at an inner door, followed by* MANDIANKA.

Come, Charadutta, you must come in: no denial. Come.

CHARADUTTA *enters slowly, and as if unwillingly, followed by* MAITREYA, *who gazes curiously around.*

SECOND GAMBLER

Charadutta!

FIRST GAMBLER

What was the wager? In any case, I have won it.

SECOND GAMBLER

This passes belief, and must be confirmed by the dice before I shall believe it.

RAMBHA

If you will be so good as to sit down. These gentlemen care only for dice and conversation, and will not disturb us.

CHARADUTTA

We have brought you home in safety: suffer us to retire.

MAITREYA [*whispering*]

Already?

RAMBHA

My daughter will not allow it. You are to sit down, and she will with be you in a moment. Ho, Pallava, Madhavika!

Women come in and offer refreshments to CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA.

MAITREYA [*to* CHARADUTTA]

Is it a house or a palace? Have you ever seen so many useless and beautiful things in a single room?

FIRST GAMBLER

Though Charadutta is here, he would sooner be anywhere else by the look in his eyes, and the uneasiness of his fingers.

MAITREYA

Did I not tell you? Did I tell you half? I should take you away from here at once, but the fact is I am far too well off myself to think of getting up from these heavenly cushions and setting down this nectar of Sudra.

RAMBHA [*to* CHARADUTTA]

Your friend does more justice to our humble hospitality than you do.

CHARADUTTA

My eyes are feasted with colour; what other sense need feast?

MAITREYA

If there should only be music in addition to all these luxuries of the senses, my poor friend is lost for ever.

RAMBHA

Ah, dear sir, if you knew the cost of the least small thing in the place. Every one of them bought with the best money. There remains little enough to one who, like myself, has to keep the house, as they say, going. And Vasantasena, who is so free with her

costliest jewels, always giving them away, giving away more than she gets, and to those who can have no pretence to deserve them.

CHARADUTTA

I once knew what pleasure it was to give gifts. Now I can only envy her.

RAMBHA

For that you have no good reason. She gives them away, throws them away, as if jewels were meant for the poor.

CHARADUTTA

The poor have rarely the chance of knowing that such things exist. To see them, worn by Vasantasena, is riches enough to a poor man.

RAMBHA

How can you talk of jewels?

FIRST GAMBLER

Do you see how blackly the old witch looks into his eyes, mumbling words that she doesn't say to him? Charadutta is no welcome guest here.

SECOND GAMBLER

Wait till Vasantasena returns. Who knows? I have won from you.

FIRST GAMBLER

I was not looking. Show me the dice.

CHARADUTTA

I must bid farewell to Vasantasena.

RAMBHA

Tell Vasantasena that Charadutta is going.
One of the women goes into the inner room.

MAITREYA [*rising slowly*]

Charadutta, I am sure it would be better to go before she comes back. We have time to go before she comes back.

FIRST GAMBLER

Show me the dice, I say.

SECOND GAMBLER

Here are the numbers.

FIRST GAMBLER

Give me the dice into my hand!

CHARADUTTA [*with disgust, rising*]

What is this angry talk?

FIRST GAMBLER

You cheated.

SECOND GAMBLER

What do you mean?

FIRST GAMBLER

Give me the dice. Your dice were loaded.

THIRD GAMBLER

It is true. He has been cheating.

SECOND GAMBLER

You insult me.

FIRST GAMBLER

Here are proofs. Give me back all that you have won from me, or I will call the officer of justice, and you shall be banished from the kingdom.

SECOND GAMBLER

Let me go.

FIRST GAMBLER

Give me back my money.

THIRD GAMBLER

Give him back the ten suvarnas.

In the midst of the hubbub the curtains over the inner room are thrust back, and VASANTASENA, *dressed as a dancer, in gorgeous clothes, is seen standing, motionless, looking with disdain at the gamblers, the face of the* MAID *visible over her shoulder. She stands there without a word, until suddenly the gamblers catch sight of her, and become silent. She comes slowly into the room, with scornful eyes.*

VASANTASENA

Gentlemen, this is my house, and disputes are settled in the street.

They go out confusedly, quarrelling, VASANTASENA *turns apologetically to* CHARADUTTA, *and then says bitterly to her mother:*

These were your friends! [*To Charadutta.*] My lord, may this be forgotten?

CHARADUTTA

It is forgotten already. But I must not wait here another moment.

VASANTASENA

Then you do not forget.

CHARADUTTA

You must not think that. A duty calls me; I must go back.

VASANTASENA

You are my guest. I have only music and dancing to welcome you; but do you not love music? Nay, be seated. [*They sit down.*]

CHARADUTTA

More than anything in the world.

VASANTASENA

I love music so much that my body follows it wherever it goes. When I dance, it is to say more clearly, and in my own voice, what music says. We will have music, and I will dance for you. Call in the musicians.

MAID *goes into the inner part of the house and returns presently with Musicians.*

CHARADUTTA

I have often dreamed of a dance which should be more articulate, more human, than music: dance that dance to me, Vasantasena, for I have never seen it.

RAMBHA

He must never see it.

MAITREYA

Now she will dance the heart out of his body.

VASANTASENA

Have you never thought how we, whose business is love, have learned to speak without speech, to sing without words, to express every emotion by a gesture? They teach us to dance, and we dance as they teach us; but there is something which no master can ever teach us.

CHARADUTTA

Have you learned that lesson which no master can teach you?

VASANTASENA

I am beginning to learn it. I will show you how it begins. But I will sing first, because words follow music the first part of the way. [*Sings*]

How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights!
As the apple upon the bough
Thy sweetness invites.
A fountain of gardens, a well
Of water alone;
A pomegranate fruit and the smell
Of Lebanon.
Awake, O north wind, and blow
On my garden, O south!
What spices are these that outflow
From the kiss of her mouth?

O vineyard, she is thy vine:
What are aloes and myrrh?
Her love is much better than wine:
What is like unto her?

CHARADUTTA

A lover wrote it, and when you sing it, it makes every man a lover.

VASANTASENA

Shall I sing you or say you out of love then, and in a song of the same singer? But this is better for speaking than for singing. [*She repeats a song against love.*]

There is a thing in the world that has been since the world began:
The hatred of man for woman, the hatred of woman for man.
When shall this thing be ended? When love ends, hatred ends,
For love is a chain between foes, and love is a sword between friends.
Shall there never be love without hatred? Not since the world began,
Until man teach honour to woman, and woman teach pity to man.

O that a man might live his life for a little tide
Without this rage in his heart, and without this foe at his side!
He could eat and sleep and be merry and forget, he could live well enough,
Were it not for this thing that remembers and hates, and that hurts and is love.

But peace has not been in the world since love and the world began,
For the man remembers the woman, and the woman remembers the man.

CHARADUTTA

That was written by a lover who knew all that goes to make up love, and you say it as if you knew that hate is the salt and savour of love.

VASANTASENA

Indeed I know no such thing; but speak what I have learned. If I give over words I shall have to speak truth, whether I will or not, for the body cannot lie.

RAMBHA [*getting up and coming over to her*]

Vasantasena, you are not to dance.

VASANTASENA

Mother, I am going to dance.

RAMBHA

It kills you when you dance, and there are no princes here; no one will give you jewels and gold and slaves; you dance with too much of your soul and body.

VASANTASENA

I am going to dance.

RAMBHA *hobbles grumblingly back to her seat.*

MAITREYA

Now she is going to capture him; if she dies for it she will capture him. Will not anything keep her from dancing?

CHARADUTTA

Dance, Vasantasena!

There is music; women come forward strewing roses, and slowly VASANTASENA *rises, and steps forward. She dances a dance of slow and various movement, with pantomime; at the climax she crouches and utters a wordless song, hoarse and harsh, pathetic and terrible, after which she rises, takes a step, and staggers, as if about to fall. Meanwhile,* CHARADUTTA, *towards whom her whole dance is directed, follows her motions in a low voice, like an undertone or accompaniment, interpreting them to himself, and falling gradually into an ecstasy, always restrained, and as if her soul were a mirror to her movements. At the last movement when she has come almost close to him, he catches her in his arms as she is about to fall.*

CHARADUTTA

What is she dancing? It is the dawn, it is herself, it is spring, it is an awakening. It is the soul awakening to love. And love comes as a little child, and she smiles to it, unafraid. And her eyes grow graver, and her mouth has tasted love like a rose-leaf, and the scent of roses is in her nostrils. Now she breathes more heavily, a delicious pain is in her eyes, and her hands reach after the hands of love. Her heart is full of a strange sorrow, which is sweeter than honey;

knowledge comes into her eyes like an anguish and like a solace; her mouth thirsts and laughs; and the mouth of love is upon her mouth. Now she knows what joy is, and how near joy is to sorrow, and a langour of vehement peace envelops her. She is a garden of roses, she is the mystical rose of a garden of roses: the rose is full of joy in the wind that is in the garden of spices. O rose, rose, the joy of love is forever! But the wind is turning chill and she shivers, the rose trembles because the wind envelops her; and the sun has gone down, and it is evening, and the night begins to creep about her. She suffers cold, darkness and shame; she that was a flower has become a weed: shall not the weed be plucked up and cast out in the burning?

Here he is silent, while VASANTASENA *sings her wordless song.*

O fate, the sickle of time, cut not down this weed that was a rose. Sharp death is upon her, she bows her head: is it too late? Is it too late for love?

He rushes forward and catches her in his arms as she falls.

O Vasantasena, was it all truth? Speak, answer me, Vasantasena!

She lies with closed eyes, and he lays her back on the cushions. RAMBHA, MANDANIKA, *and the women hurry up and press around her, holding salts and scents to her.*

RAMBHA

I knew it, I knew it. She is bewitched and will put an end to her own life in mere joy and intoxication. I beg you, sir, to stand back: do you wish literally to kill her?

MAITREYA

The tricks of a woman are numberless as the hairs of her head; what man shall count them?

CHARADUTTA

Awaken, Vasantasena.

VASANTASENA *looks up, and puts her hands silently on his.*

RAMBHA [*to the singers and musicians*]

You can all go! *They go out*
And now, my child, now that you have had your way, and danced all the breath out of your body, perhaps you will lie quiet a little. *A servant enters*
Who called you?

SERVANT

Madam.

RAMBHA

Say and go.

SERVANT

The royal Prince Samsthanaka craves leave to enter.

VASANTASENA [*starting up*]

Never!

CHARADUTTA [*drawing his sword*]

Vasantasena, give me leave!

VASANTASENA [*catching hold of him*]

No, no, you must stay here till he has gone. Mother, go to the prince and tell him that I will not see him,

tell him that I will never see him, tell him whatever will make a man most hate a woman, that he may hate me and be gone out of my way for ever.

RAMBHA

I will go to him, my daughter, and he shall not come in to you, but I shall not say to him what you have said to me, or the worse things that you have not said to me. Come, Mandanika, lend me your arm: I cannot go quickly enough to where the prince is waiting.

She hobbles out through the door on the left, leaning on the MAID. MAITREYA *goes ostentatiously to the other end of the room, and turns his back with a shrug upon* CHARADUTTA *and* VASANTASENA.

CHARADUTTA

Why do you keep me back, when with one stroke of my sword I would have rid you of this enemy, and the hand of a tyrant worse than the tyrant on the throne?

VASANTASENA

Would you have done this for me?

CHARADUTTA

Let me go and I will do it.

VASANTASENA

Then I will hold you, for now I am more careful of your life than of my own.

CHARADUTTA

What is my life worth, now that I am a beggar? But your life has the power and should have the immortality of the stars.

VASANTASENA

Promise me that you will be careful of your life as of a thing whose loss I must needs die of. Do not seek Samsthanaka! Let all such vermin be: he is a snake whose poison is death, and he seeks your life.

CHARADUTTA

I set my heel on no snake that does not lift up his head against me.

VASANTASENA

No more of him: my mother will be coming back, and this moment will be over.

CHARADUTTA

Why should this moment ever be over? If you wish it, why did you look at me in the garden of the temple at Kamsdeva?

VASANTASENA

I did not look at you. Some god looked at me through your eyes, and my being fainted, as Sanjna when her lord, the sun, looked at her.

CHARADUTTA

You looked at me, and I began to remember.

VASANTASENA

And I to forget.

CHARADUTTA

What would you forget?

VASANTASENA

Everything. Every pleasure, I have no happiness to forget.

CHARADUTTA

You have made happiness for others.

VASANTASENA

Has one of them thanked me?

CHARADUTTA

Many have loved you.

VASANTASENA

Would one of them have thanked me for love? Of all who have come to me with gifts and tears, saying "Love me or I die," is there one who would have rejoiced if I had given him all myself, all my love? That is a gift much too costly for any man to accept.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena, give me that gift.

VASANTASENA

No, I will be kinder to you. For love of you I must not let you love me.

CHARADUTTA

You have called me; first your eyes spoke to me, and I came, not knowing why I came; now you have

danced to me, and your body has spoken, and I know all your heart. You have thrown over me a net that you cannot loosen.

VASANTASENA

O Charadutta, is this truth, or is it nothing but music?

CHARADUTTA

The music is over, the dance has spoken; it is my heart that you hear now. Will you tell me that you do not love me?

VASANTASENA

I will not tell you. When I would say the name of another, why does the name of Charadutta come to my lips? When I speak to my maid, and know not what I have told her, and she smiles, why is it that I am so absent? Why is it that I am as an altar on which a perpetual fire has been lighted?

CHARADUTTA

I am a beggar, and have no gifts to bring. What will you ask of me that I may do for you?

VASANTASENA

Will you put out the perpetual fire? Many waters cannot put it out. Will you give me forgetfulness? Many bowls of sleep cannot drink down memory. Will you bring back the scent into dead roses, and bring back the honey to the honeycomb, and the grapes to the vineyard where they have been plucked and trodden in the winepress, and the feet of men are

red with them, and their eyes drunken? I have been the rose of the garden, and the honey in the honeycomb, and the grapes in the vineyard.

CHARADUTTA

I am a beggar, but I can give you all this. Love is like light, and light washes the earth.

VASANTASENA

I thirst, but have I not drunk wine, and is there more wine in the world that shall slake this thirst in me? Oh, stranger, if I could be the friend of any man, if I could love and not destroy, if I could humble myself, if I could believe and forget, and if all that I have been could be forgotten, then would Vasantasena be the beggar at the feet of Charadutta.

CHARADUTTA [*kneeling*]

The beggar at her feet!

VASANTASENA

Rise, Charadutta!

The MAID *comes in hurriedly and whispers in her ear.* CHARADUTTA *rises.* MAITREYA *comes forward and touches him.*

MAITREYA

I have been shutting my ears so long that I am only now able to realize that we are to go. I will accompany you, Charadutta.

CHARADUTTA [*vaguely*]

Are we going?

VASANTASENA

Go now. Alas! you must go. But to-morrow, meet me — to-morrow at noon in the old flower garden. I do not know if I can live so long.

CHARADUTTA

Death shall not delay me.

MAITREYA

Remember!

CHARADUTTA

What?

MAITREYA

Aryaka!

CHARADUTTA [*to* VASANTASENA]

If a thing stronger than death delays me, and I do not come, believe me, wait for me. I will surely come.

VASANTASENA

I will believe you. I will wait for you.

MAID *takes* CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *to the outer door and returns hurriedly to* VASANTASENA.

MAID

Your mother has been talking smoothly to the prince all this time: she has taken him aside there [*she points to the outer court*] so that he should not meet Charadutta; but she will not be able to hold him back much longer; he grows madder and madder, and will see you if he puts us all to the sword.

VASANTASENA [*with concentrated rage*]

He shall see me. Let him come in.

The MAID *goes out and returns presently, followed by* SAMSTHANAKA *and* RAMBHA, *who goes aside.*

SAMSTHANAKA

I am not angry with you, Vasantasena, though you have kept me waiting like a dog upon your threshold. I have the power of the kingdom in my hands; the power of my brother-in-law, who is the king; but I wait at your door, Vasantasena, like a dog upon the threshold. Why have you kept me waiting while you practised the songs that are meant for my enchantment? I heard your more than celestial voice. You were singing a song I have never heard before.

VASANTASENA

I was singing a new song.

SAMSTHANAKA

Sing it to me, Vasantasena? I not only love singing, but I myself, though born royal, and able to command all singers of music, I also sing. My slaves prepare for me dishes fried in oil, and seasoned with assafoetida: that is your only diet for a sweet voice. Another time I will sing to you, but now sing your song to me, Vasantasena.

VASANTASENA

I will not sing my new song to you.

SAMSTHANAKA

How is that? I could command you. You are no better than a slave, a dancing woman, a singer; I could have you beaten if I liked. I could have you beaten until you sang whatever I wanted. There is nothing I could not do. But I will not even command you. I will entreat you.

VASANTASENA

It is useless.

SAMSTHANAKA

You say it is useless and you are a woman. What is a woman when she speaks? She is a bough in the wind. What are women such as you but a creeper that grows by the roadside, and the crow and peacock perch on the same branch? Are you not free to all men, and am I not a man as well as a prince? If it is because of Charadutta that you put me aside, remember that Charadutta is a beggar, and, if a beggar stands in my light, he dies.

VASANTASENA

You have no power over Charadutta.

SAMSTHANAKA

I gave way to him in his own house, because every man is king in his own house, and I will do nothing against the law. Am I not the law? But I am here that I may tell you for the last time that I will suffer no man to come between us. What I will becomes mine.

VASANTASENA

What is it that you will here, prince?

SAMSTHANAKA

Your love.

VASANTASENA

I have given it away. Charadutta has taken it.

SAMSTHANAKA

The beggar, Charadutta? I will give you the crown jewels!

RAMBHA

My daughter!

VASANTASENA [*rising and moving slowly towards the inner door*]

To-morrow, at noon, in the old flower garden, Charadutta will give me a flower. [*She goes in.*]

SAMSTHANAKA

What shall I do to this seed of jackals, this brother to hyenas? Shall I grind his head between my teeth, as a nut is ground under a door?

RAMBHA

Nothing would be too bad for him, my good, kind prince. Let it be not less than heading and quartering. You see it is not my daughter at all that is against your royal highness, but only the beggarman, the dried rattling bean-stalk, that has bewitched her.

SAMSTHANAKA

I saw, I saw it clearly. She could not possibly have an aversion for me; it is this Brahmin that deludes her. We must remove Charadutta.

RAMBHA

Noble prince, if you could but. . . .

SAMSTHANAKA

Silence. I must consult my own mind.

RAMBHA

If you could only. . . .

SAMSTHANAKA

Woman, you will not allow me to think. I shall soon have a magnificent idea. Anger is fruitful to ideas and I have been mocked. I must have a large revenge. I will think out my revenge, and take less time to execute than to invent it.

RAMBHA [*creeping up and whispering mysteriously in his ear*]

Do you know to whom she has given all her jewels?

SAMSTHANAKA

Her jewels? To whom?

RAMBHA

To Charadutta's child.

SAMSTHANAKA

To the child?

RAMBHA

The father will say he knows nothing of it; but I know what I have seen.

SAMSTHANAKA

She gave her jewels to Charadutta's child?

RAMBHA

All that she had upon her, heaped them like pebbles of the road in the child's toy cart.

SAMSTHANAKA

She gives him her jewels, and she will not take my jewels!

RAMBHA

Sir, when she comes to listen to me, by-and-by, she will take your jewels.

SAMSTHANAKA

He must be removed. Ah, I have it! "To-morrow, at noon, in the Old Flower Garden." He is to give her a flower! He shall never give her a flower. I will meet him on the way. I will give him his choice of deaths. I will meet her in his place. I will show her on my sword the blood of the man who was weaker than I; she has a strong soul, and will love the stronger of two men, and the man who is alive rather than a dead man. I will take men with me, lest he should

escape me. I will win Vasantasena at the sword's point. Take this. [*He gives* RAMBHA *gold.*] And say nothing.

RAMBHA

My daughter will be well and safe?

SAMSTHANAKA

Have no fear. And fear nothing if it should please her, rather than returning home, to follow me to the royal palace.

RAMBHA

You have given me only twenty pieces of gold.

SAMSTHANAKA

You shall have more gold, you shall have as much gold as you want. See that she comes to the Garden. I will see that Charadutta does not come. And now call someone who can call my carriage for me. I go on foot only before gods and Brahmins.

They go towards the door as the curtain falls, RAMBHA *hobbling obsequiously before the prince.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

The Old Flower Garden, with an open temple at one side. Enter SAMSTHANAKA *and* ATTENDANT. *At intervals during the early part of the scene* SAMSTHANAKA *picks flowers, until he has gradually made a large bunch. He seems to do it unconsciously as the thought of* VASANTASENA *recurs to him.*

AMSTHANAKA [*walking up and down*]

Are my men ready for him; are they lying in wait on the road that he is sure to come?

ATTENDANT

Yes, my lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

When he comes they are to surround him, and, if he resists, kill him.

ATTENDANT

Yes, my lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

Perhaps I should meet him face to face; it would be more royal; draw my sword upon him; but no, that would be to treat him as my equal, and he is only a Brahmin, and I am a prince. Is Charadutta a good fighter?

ATTENDANT

It is said so, my lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

One can never judge by reports. In any case he would not stand against me if he saw me sword in hand, like a king and the avenger of kings. There is a majesty in my aspect, is there not, son of a slave?

ATTENDANT

The majesty of Indra.

SAMSTHANAKA

Need I condescend to the business? The slaying of a man is less to me than the stringing of a lute. My men shall deal with him. I will not meddle in it.

ATTENDANT

The way my lord chooses is always the way of wisdom.

SAMSTHANAKA

Does a man suffer much when he is killed with the sword? You have seen men killed in battle.

ATTENDANT

A man who is killed in battle dies gladly; he touches joy for an instant and then rests for an eternity.

SAMSTHANAKA

Why should I prepare joy or rest for Charadutta? I am too kind if I kill him with the sword. I would have him linger, and be without hope, and not be able to die. I would have him die of shame before death

overtook him. Otherwise my revenge will be paltry, a mean man's revenge, not the judgment of a king. What would hurt Charadutta more than death?

ATTENDANT

His honour.

SAMSTHANAKA

Are you sure of that? Strange, that dishonour should hurt more than death. I do not understand it. Tell me why you think this strange thing of Charadutta.

ATTENDANT

He has lost everything else; honour he has not lost; if he had to choose between losing life and losing honour, what could there be to make him hesitate?

SAMSTHANAKA

How do you know these things that are above your station? You are not to think of them any more. But you seem to know Charadutta, and I will believe you. Charadutta must not die until he has lost his honour. After that he shall lose his life.

ATTENDANT

My lord can do all things.

SAMSTHANAKA

Let me take counsel with my mind. Stand further off, that I may have room to think.

ATTENDANT *moves a few steps away.* SAMSTHANAKA *stands still with a fixed look. Pause.*

I have it. The jewels of Vasantasena!

ATTENDANT [*coming forward*]

My lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

I will accuse him of theft. He shall be brought before the court of law, he shall be convicted on evidence, he shall be condemned to death as a thief. I shall have killed more than his life.

ATTENDANT

It will be easier for my lord to have killed him by the sword.

SAMSTHANAKA

Easier? Then I will take the more difficult way. If I could have him arrested before he can come to the garden! or, if not arrested, at least detained. I will find out a way. Some god who helps princes will open a way for me; perhaps the god whose empty shrine is before me.

As he speaks the FIRST GAMBLER *runs hurriedly in.*

FIRST GAMBLER

In the name of all the gods, do not betray me!

He walks backwards into the temple and sits down on the empty pedestal. He is immediately followed by others, who rush into the garden and look around in surprise.

THIRD GAMBLER

I saw him enter the garden; he must have taken sanctuary in the temple.

SECOND GAMBLER

He may hide in hell, but he shall not escape me till he has paid every farthing.

THIRD GAMBLER

Let me ask this lord. My lord, we are following a gambler who has cheated us of ten suvarnas; has any man passed this way?

SAMSTHANAKA

I have seen no one but the god.

SECOND GAMBLER

He must be inside. We will wait. Then he will think we have gone away, and he will come out, and we shall have him. Let us wait here in the porch of the temple.

THIRD GAMBLER

Look, here are his footsteps. He was shaking with fear. every limb of him. I can see it by the marks of his feet, as they slipped and stumbled over the ground.

SECOND GAMBLER

The track is lost here; there are no more footmarks.

THIRD GAMBLER

Hey, they are all reversed. He has walked backward into the temple.

SECOND GAMBLER

I thought the temple was empty; there used to be no image in it. What is this image?

THIRD GAMBLER

Is it of wood, do you think?

SECOND GAMBLER

I think it is of stone.

They show by their side-glances that they have recognized the GAMBLER. *They go near him and put out their hands as if to feel.*

THIRD GAMBLER

Never mind. Let us sit down and play out our game.

They sit down under the pedestal, take out their cowries, scratch four compartments upon the ground and play.

SECOND GAMBLER

Fourteen.

THIRD GAMBLER

Eleven.

SECOND GAMBLER

Fifteen.

THIRD GAMBLER

Now, if one had no money, the mere sound of the rattling of the dice would be as tantalizing as the sound of a drum to a king without a kingdom.

SECOND GAMBLER

Or a cup of strong drink to a drunkard. It is my throw.

THIRD GAMBLER

No, it is mine.

FIRST GAMBLER [*jumping down*]

No, it is mine. [*They seize him.*]

SECOND GAMBLER

Now, hypocrite, villain, mocker of the gods, are you caught or not? Will you pay or no? Do you owe me ten suvarnas or no?

FIRST GAMBLER

If you will take your hands off me I will answer your questions one at a time.

SECOND GAMBLER

Answer them all at once.

FIRST GAMBLER

Yes, no, yes.

SECOND GAMBLER

What do you mean by yes, no, yes?

FIRST GAMBLER

Let me explain to you in your ear. [*Aside.*] If I pay you half the money will you let me off the rest?

SECOND GAMBLER

Agreed.

FIRST GAMBLER

Let me speak to him a moment. [*Whispers to the* THIRD GAMBLER.] I will give you security for half the debt if you cry quits for the other half.

THIRD GAMBLER

Agreed.

FIRST GAMBLER [*to* SECOND GAMBLER *aloud*]

You let me off half the debt?

SECOND GAMBLER

I do.

FIRST GAMBLER

And you give up half?

THIRD GAMBLER

I do.

FIRST GAMBLER

Then good morning to you, gentlemen. [*He turns as if to go.*]

SECOND GAMBLER

Not so fast; where are you going?

FIRST GAMBLER

Why look you, one of you has let me off one half, and the other has let me off another half. Is it not clear that I am quits for the whole? I wish you a good morning.

SECOND GAMBLER [*seizing him*]

Stop a moment. You know my name, you know that I know a thing or two; you know if I am going to be done like this. Down with the whole sum, or you come with me to prison.

FIRST GAMBLER

O merciful sir!

SECOND GAMBLER

Pay and go free.

FIRST GAMBLER

Where am I to get the money?

SECOND GAMBLER

Sell your father.

FIRST GAMBLER

Is my father here to sell?

SECOND GAMBLER

Sell your mother.

FIRST GAMBLER

Is my mother here to sell?

SECOND GAMBLER

Sell yourself.

FIRST GAMBLER

Myself? If anyone would only buy me! Who'll buy? Who'll buy? Here's a gentleman who will perhaps buy me for ten suvarnas.

SAMSTHANAKA

Are you worth it?

FIRST GAMBLER

Am I not a cat in climbing, a deer in running, a snake in twisting, a hawk in darting upon its prey? I am Maya in disguising myself, and Sarawasti in the gift of tongues.

SAMSTHANAKA

I buy you. You are the man I want. Here are ten suvarnas. Loose him and let him go.

SECOND GAMBLER

The property is yours.

Takes the money and they both go

FIRST GAMBLER

I am your slave for life. What shall I do for you?

SAMSTHANAKA

Sir, I have a piece of work for you. If you do it you shall be rewarded, though seeing that I have bought you, you belong to me already. I am Prince Samsthanaka, and I can reward you like a prince.

FIRST GAMBLER

My lord, I will be a hawk for you in the air: what is there I should see? I will be a wolf in seizing: what is there I should seize?

SAMSTHANAKA

Seize Charadutta.

FIRST GAMBLER

What, the new lover of Vasantasena?

SAMSTHANAKA

Why do you think he is a lover of Vasantasena?

FIRST GAMBLER

It was at her house that I played dice once too often. Last night Charadutta was there.

SAMSTHANAKA [*flinging down the flowers*]

You saw him? you? at her house? The thunder of all the gods blacken her and him! That is why she would not let me in! I have not only been insulted, I have been deceived. If she were not more beautiful than the dawn I would put her to death with my own hands. If she were not more desirable than the dawn I would bring eternal night upon her. But first I will avenge myself upon Charadutta. I have the means, if you will do my service swiftly and without fault.

FIRST GAMBLER

Tell me, and I will do it.

SAMSTHANAKA

Can you disguise yourself as an officer of justice, intercept Charadutta, who is now on his way to this garden, and convey him secretly to my palace, where I will lodge a charge against him that he has stolen the jewels of Vasantasena?

FIRST GAMBLER

I have personated a god. Can I not personate an officer of justice? [*He alters the arrangement of his clothes, and disguises his face.*]

SAMSTHANAKA

Go at once. Take no one with you. He will follow you in the name of the law. Go at once.

GAMBLER *goes out hurriedly.*

[*Turns to attendant*] I have no further need of you nor of my men. Return home and leave me alone here.

ATTENDANT *goes.*

The sun sits like an angry ape in the sky; I breathe flame, and there is no shade under the trees. O Vasantasena, you burn my heart like the sun at noonday. I wait for you, and I do not know if it is with love or hatred.

There is a sound of wheels. He listens.

She is here. She is sending away her carriage. She is alone.

He sees the flowers, hurriedly picks them up, and then draws back, in the shadow of a tree. VASANTASENA *comes slowly forward, looking from side to side.*

VASANTASENA [*stopping and putting her hand to her eye*]

My right eye throbs: it is an evil omen. [*She catches sight of* SAMSTHANAKA]. Ah!

SAMSTHANAKA [*speaking in tones of cold malice*]

Why do you stand with your eyes cast down to the earth, like cattle that hang their heads against the rain? Why do you turn pale and shrink back, as if it were not I, Prince Samsthanaka, your lover, that you had come to meet?

VASANTASENA [*faintly, looking round as if for help*]

I did not come to meet you.

SAMSTHANAKA [*coming nearer, and offering her flowers*]

Here are flowers for my little Vasantasena, my dove, my gazelle; all the flowers of the garden wait for her; she has come to receive the gift, not of a flower, but of all the flowers of the garden. This garden was made to be a place of delight, and these trees were planted to give shelter to the unsheltered. Come under their shadow, for the sun is a flame in the sky. You are pale, Vasantasena: take these flowers and come into the shadow of the trees.

He offers her the flowers but she does not take them, and they fall to the ground between them.

VASANTASENA

I will not come out of the sun.

SAMSTHANAKA

You have cast away my flowers, Vasantasena. Yet you came here for a flower. No one is here to give you that flower. Look around, he is not here. He is not anywhere among the trees; he is not hiding in the temple; he is not even under the ground.

VASANTASENA [*eagerly*]

What do you mean?

SAMSTHANAKA

Has Charadutta already forgotten that he was to meet you? You see he does not come. If he were here I would go away. I take the place of the absent.

VASANTASENA

What have you done to him? something stronger than death, he said: what have you done to Charadutta?

SAMSTHANAKA

You are a dancing girl, Vasantasena, you are the mart of love, you are the mine of pleasure. It is your trade to welcome alike the man whom you love and the man whom you do not love. Why, even if you do not love me, have you always spurned me? Why do you turn your eyes and your heart only on the man who is not here, on Charadutta? It is not too late, Vasantasena. And as for Charadutta, you see that he is not here. [*He comes closer to her.*]

VASANTASENA

Why is he not here? O where is Charadutta?

SAMSTHANAKA

Do not ask me, Vasantasena. He is not here, yet you run after him.

VASANTASENA

I will run after him until I find him. Let me pass, perhaps he is here, somewhere in the garden.

SAMSTHANAKA

Listen. This man is a beggar, and a beggar is an empty pool.

VASANTASENA

The pool is full to the brim whose water is unfit for drinking.

SAMSTHANAKA

Will you always scorn me? And is it always for his sake that you scorn me?

VASANTASENA

Let me go to him.

SAMSTHANAKA

He is not here. But I am here, Vasantasena.

VASANTASENA

Shall the swan's mate harbour with crows?

SAMSTHANAKA

You are a strangling creeper. You are a deadly weed. You must be rooted up out of the garden.

VASANTASENA

Let me go. I am afraid of your eyes and your hands.

SAMSTHANAKA

Do you see these hands? These ten fingers are not the petals of the lotus. What if they should take you by the hair of your head as Jatayn seized the wife of Bali?

VASANTASENA

Why do you cry upon me as if I had done you a wrong? I have done you no wrong. Let me go, let me go home. [*She turns and tries to pass.*]

SAMSTHANAKA

Do you see these hands? It is not with henna that they are red. It is not the sun that blinds me as I look upon you. What shall I do to the woman who has spurned me as jackals spurn carrion?

VASANTASENA

Let me go.

SAMSTHANAKA

The tiger does not only kill. Why should I kill you when you might live for my delight? Choose!

VASANTASENA

There is nothing to choose.

SAMSTHANAKA

Are you not in my power?

VASANTASENA

My body, not my innocence.

SAMSTHANAKA

We are alone; who shall see us?

VASANTASENA

The ten points of the compass, the eyes of the wood-gods, the moon, the sun that now burns upon us, the judge of the dead, the wind, the air, your conscience, and the earth: these are the witnesses of all things.

SAMSTHANAKA

I will cast my cloak over you and you shall not be seen.

VASANTASENA

Are you mad?

SAMSTHANAKA

I fear nothing, and I will do a great deed. Are you ready to die, Vasantasena?

VASANTASENA

No, no, I am not ready to die. I have not lived yet. Let me go. [*In struggling with him she strikes him in the face.*]

SAMSTHANAKA

A woman has struck me, a light woman. She must die.

VASANTASENA

Have pity on me, have pity! O I cannot die. [*She falls on her knees before him.*]

SAMSTHANAKA

Do jackals fly or crows run? Then how should I have pity? [*He takes off his girdle and makes a noose of it.*]

VASANTASENA

Mother, where are you? O Charadutta, I shall die and I shall not have known your love. The gods bless Charadutta!

SAMSTHANAKA [*drawing the noose about her neck*]

That name! again, daughter of a slave!

VASANTASENA [*in a half-choked voice*]

The gods bless Charadutta!

She falls motionless on the ground. SAMSTHANAKA *leans over her, then looks up and around, moves away, comes back and gazes down at her, then takes off his cloak and is laying it over her when he notices the arms embroidered on it; snatches back his cloak, looks helplessly and anxiously round, then gathers handfuls of dry leaves and covers her body. Then furtively and stealthily hurries out. There is a pause. Then a rough voice is heard singing in a kind of slow chant, like an old beggar, and* MENDICANT FRIAR *comes in. He carries a rosary in his hand, a wallet of black deerskin at his side, an ochre-red cloak over his arm; he has a long beard.*

MENDICANT [*sings*]

Good fellow-men, I bid you heap
Good deeds, and halter appetite;
The drum of meditation keep
Your souls awake, lest in the night,
The thieving senses at the door
Break in and take away your store.

He who has slain the senses five,
Five brethren, and the hangman self,
Nor left poor ignorance alive,
Has conquered heaven for himself.
What profits it a shaven head?
Show me a shaven soul instead.

Shade at last, and the hour advises me to rest. I have washed my cloak; where shall I put it to dry? I will hang it on the boughs of this tree. No, they are too high: I will lay it on the ground. No, there is too much dust. Ah! the wind has blown together a heap of dry leaves: I will put it there. There, it will soon be dry.

He spreads out his cloak over the body of VASANTASENA *and sits down a little way off against a tree.*

Glory to Buddha! How beautifully everything in the world is adapted to its purpose. Here am I, a mendicant friar, begging my way about the world. I have come to this city, which is the most virtuous city in this region; in this city I come by mere good fortune to the Old Flower Garden, which is the most famous garden in the city: I find a pond to wash my cloak in, a shady tree to sit under, and I am alone, far from the enemities of men and the too pleasing wiles of women, where I can meditate on the divine perfections. I will close my eyes and repeat the sacred "Om." What was that?

He sits up and looks round.

Something stirred or sighed in the leaves. Ah, it was only the crackling of the scorched leaves under the wetness of my cloak. I will compose myself to meditation; I will think neither upon my sins, which are of

old, nor upon the virtues which I would acquire; but I will gaze fixedly at the leaves yonder, on which I have laid my cloak and I will repeat — O what is this? The leaves spread outward like the wings of a bird? And there is a hand, a woman's hand, with rich ornaments on it. What can this mean? The gods preserve me from pollution!

He rises and draws his cloak carefully away, disclosing VASANTASENA, *who lies at full length. She feebly raises her hand and points to her mouth.*

She wants water: the pool is far away: what can I do? Ah, my cloak is still wet. [*He squeezes some water out of his cloak upon her face, and fans her with it.*]

VASANTASENA [*raising her head*]

Thanks, friend. Who are you?

MENDICANT

I am a mendicant friar. I was meditating in this garden of peace.

VASANTASENA

Of peace!

MENDICANT

What has befallen you, lady?

VASANTASENA

I think I have been dead.

MENDICANT

Rise, lady.

VASANTASENA

I cannot rise; give me your hand.

MENDICANT

That I may not do; take hold of this creeper and raise yourself.

He bends down to her a creeper on the trees; she lays hold of it and draws herself up.

Come, I will lead you.

VASANTASENA

I cannot walk.

MENDICANT

If you will take hold of this, I will lead you, and I shall not have broken my oath, which forbids me to touch a woman.

VASANTASENA

I cannot go far.

MENDICANT

There is a convent close by; you shall rest there, and recover your strength. Come, lady, gently.

VASANTASENA

Am I really alive? [*She walks feebly, holding the end of the creeper.*]

MENDICANT

What should the just man care for life or death? His is the world to come.

They go out together.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

The Hall of Justice. The JUDGE, *the* PROVOST, *and the* RECORDER *seated. People standing; at the back* SAMSTHANAKA.

CRIER

Give ear, all men, to the words of the judge!

JUDGE [*rising*]

I am here to do justice, on the just and on the unjust alike. A judge should be learned, wise, eloquent, dispassionate, impartial; he should pronounce judgment only after due enquiry and deliberation; he should be a guardian to the weak, a terror to the wicked; his heart should be without covetousness, his mind intent only on truth and equity, and his should it be to keep aloof the anger of the king.

PROVOST

Your worship has painted his own picture in delineating the features of the perfect judge.

RECORDER

You shall be taxed with favour when the moon is charged with obscurity.

JUDGE

The quality of a judge is readily the subject of censure. It is always hard to see into the hearts of others, and

hard also is it to disentangle the coils of their doings. How often is truth far from the lips of men, and how often is an accusation brought against the innocent. Justice is in the hands of the gods alone; it is enough for us if we will to be just, and put our trust in the justice of the gods. [*He seats himself.*] Officer, go forth and see who comes to demand justice.

OFFICER *goes to the other end of the court and cries:*

OFFICER

By order of his honour, the judge, I ask who is there that demands justice?

SAMSTHANAKA

I, the king's brother-in-law.

JUDGE

This is out of order. There are other cases that have to be tried first. Go to him and tell him that his case cannot be tried to-day.

OFFICER [*going down the Hall*]

I am desired to inform your excellency that your case cannot be tried to-day.

SAMSTHANAKA

How, not to-day? Tell the judge that I shall go straight to the king, my brother-in-law, and that I shall have him dismissed from his office, and his office given to another. My case is to be heard to-day.

OFFICER

Stay one moment, your honour, and I will carry your message to the Court. [*He goes back to the* JUDGE.]

Please your worship, his excellency is very angry, and declares if you will not try his suit to-day he will go to the king and procure your worship's dismissal.

JUDGE

It is in the fool's power. He must be heard. Call him, and let him come hither.

OFFICER

Will your excellency be pleased to come forward? Your case will be heard.

SAMSTHANAKA

O indeed! first it could not be heard; now it will be heard. Very well: the judges fear me: they will do my will. [*He goes up to the judges.*] I am well pleased, gentlemen, by your decision; it is for you also to be well pleased, for your good pleasure lies in my hands.

JUDGE [*aside*]

Is this the language of a plaintiff? Be seated.

SAMSTHANAKA

Assuredly. Are not all these places mine, and shall I not be seated where I please? [*To the* PROVOST] I will sit here. No. [*To the* RECORDER] I will sit here; no no. [*To the* JUDGE, *laying his hand on his shoulder.*] I will sit here.

JUDGE

Your excellency has a complaint to bring?

SAMSTHANAKA

I have indeed.

JUDGE

Prefer it.

SAMSTHANAKA

All in good time. Do not forget that I am of noble family, that my father is the king's father-in-law, the king is my father's son-in-law, I am the brother-in-law of the king.

JUDGE

All this we know; but what have birth and rank to do with virtue? Thorns grow most plentifully on the richest soil. Declare therefore your suit.

SAMSTHANAKA

It is this; but it is no fault of mine. My noble brother-in-law, for his good pleasure, presented me, for my ease and recreation, with the fairest of the royal gardens, the Old Flower Garden. I go there daily, to see that it is well kept and weeded and in order. To-day I go there as usual, and what do I see (how could I believe my eyes?) but the dead body of a murdered woman!

JUDGE

Did you recognize the woman?

SAMSTHANAKA

Alas, how could I fail to recognize her, the pride of our city, all her jewels gone from her, stolen no doubt by some miscreant who had lured her into the lonely garden? I saw Vasantasena, strangled by his hands, not by me. [*He breaks short.*]

JUDGE

The city is ill guarded. Gentlemen, you have heard the complaint; let it be recorded, including the words "not by me."

RECORDER [*writing*]

It is written.

SAMSTHANAKA

What have I said? My lords, I was going to say, not by me was the deed beheld. It is not necessary to note down these mere trifles.

JUDGE

How, then, if you did not see it done, do you know that Vasantasena was strangled, and for the sake of her jewels?

SAMSTHANAKA

I conclude so, for the neck was bare and swollen, and her dress rifled of its jewels.

PROVOST

It seems like enough.

SAMSTHANAKA [*aside*]

I breathe again.

JUDGE

First of all, let officers be sent with speed to the Old Flower Garden, and let them bring hither the body of the murdered woman.

Officers go out. There is a stir in the court, and the FIRST GAMBLER *comes in hurriedly and makes signs to* SAMSTHANAKA, *who leaves his place and goes aside with him.*

GAMBLER

My lord, I have failed. I have found Charadutta nowhere, though I have searched every corner of the city. I have failed to delay him from my lord's path.

SAMSTHANAKA

Fool, the god whose place you took in the temple has done better than you. A murder has been committed in the garden: remember, it was Charadutta who did it, and he did it for the jewels of Vasantasena.

He goes back to his place.

PROVOST

On what further evidence does this suit depend?

JUDGE

The case is twofold, and must be investigated both in relation to facts and to assertions; the verbal investigation relates to plaintiff and respondent, that of facts depends upon the judge.

SAMSTHANAKA

My lords, I have further evidence to give, I have an accusation to make.

JUDGE

Whom do you accuse?

SAMSTHANAKA

I accuse Charadutta.

JUDGE

Prince, you are jesting. It were as easy to weigh Himalaya, to ford the ocean, or to grasp the wind, as to fix a stain on Charadutta.

SAMSTHANAKA

I have evidence.

JUDGE

Give your evidence. And meanwhile let Charadutta be summoned, not as one accused, but as one who would rather that evil tales were told of him to his face than behind his back. Say, at his perfect convenience.

Officer is going out.

SAMSTHANAKA

I demand the mother of Vasantasena as a witness.

JUDGE

Let her be summoned, but with all courtesy.

OFFICER *goes out and returns immediately with* RAMBHA.

OFFICER

She was waiting outside the court.

RAMBHA

My lords, my lords, where is my daughter? O my heart! I am fainting, what with the heat and the emotion. Will your worships allow me to sit down?

JUDGE

Be seated.

RAMBHA

What have I heard? What has happened to my daughter?

JUDGE

You are the mother of Vasantasena?

RAMBHA

I am.

JUDGE

Where is your daughter?

RAMBHA

That is what I ask? Where is my daughter?

JUDGE

You are not to ask questions. You are to answer them. Where did you last see your daughter?

RAMBHA

She was preparing to go to meet a friend.

JUDGE

Where was she to meet this friend?

RAMBHA

In the Old Flower Garden.

JUDGE

The name of the friend?

RAMBHA

Surely, your worship, that is not a fit question for your worship to ask?

JUDGE

No hesitation. The law asks the question.

PROVOST

Speak out, there is no harm in saying it. The law asks the question.

RAMBHA

Well then, gentlemen, to tell the truth, as you insist upon it, and the very own truth it is (not that I ever spoke otherwise), the friend is a good gentleman who is the son of Sagaradatta, who was the son of the Provost Vinayaddatta, whose own name is Charadutta. He lives near the Exchange. My daughter went to meet him this morning in the Old Flower Garden. Where is my daughter?

SAMSTHANAKA

You hear, judges: let this be set down in writing. It is Charadutta whom I have accused. You see that he is guilty.

PROVOST

He is her friend: what is more natural than that she should go to meet him?

RAMBHA

My lords, tell me where is my daughter?

CHARADUTTA *enters with the officer.*

RECORDER

Here is Charadutta: such straight features could never hide a crooked mind.

JUDGE

Sir, be seated. Officer, a seat.

OFFICER

It is here. Be seated, Sir.

SAMSTHANAKA

All this pother for a woman-killer! But never mind.

JUDGE

Noble Charadutta, I have to ask you – any intimacy or connection has ever subsisted between you and the daughter of this woman?

CHARADUTTA

What woman?

JUDGE

This.

CHARADUTTA [*rising*]

Lady, I salute you.

RAMBHA

Sir, is it you that . . .

JUDGE

Be silent. And now tell me, Charadutta, were you ever acquainted with Vasantasena?

CHARADUTTA *hesitates.*

SAMSTHANAKA

See how modest he is or pretends to be! But it is a cloak, a cloak.

PROVOST

Do not hesitate, Charadutta. There is a charge against you.

CHARADUTTA

What if Vasantasena were my friend?

JUDGE

No evasion, Charadutta. The law obliges you to speak out, and to speak the whole truth.

CHARADUTTA

First tell me who is my accuser.

SAMSTHANAKA [*rising*]

I am.

CHARADUTTA [*contemptuously*]

You! Then it is a serious matter.

SAMSTHANAKA

A serious matter indeed. What! Do you think you are going to rob and murder a woman and that no one is ever to know of it?

CHARADUTTA

Are you out of your mind? What do you mean?

JUDGE

Enough of this. Tell me, was Vasantasena your friend?

CHARADUTTA

She was, she is. Why do you say she was? Tell me what all this means?

SAMSTHANAKA

You see his agitation? Guilt will out.

JUDGE

When did you last see her?

CHARADUTTA

At her house last night.

JUDGE

And what appointment did she make with you?

CHARADUTTA

Appointment?

JUDGE

You are to answer.

CHARADUTTA

I promised to meet her at noon to-day in the Old Flower Garden.

SAMSTHANAKA

You hear, judges; you hear him confess his crime?

CHARADUTTA

Sirs, what is this talk of crime? You want to make me believe that some terrible thing has happened to Vasantasena. But you will not tell me what it is? Why do you torture me?

SAMSTHANAKA

You hear the guilty wretch? He betrays himself.

JUDGE

Be silent, both of you. And tell me, Charadutta, did you meet Vasantasena at noon in the Old Flower Garden as you had appointed?

CHARADUTTA

I did not.

JUDGE

Why?

CHARADUTTA

I was unavoidably prevented.

PROVOST

This sounds strange.

JUDGE

You were prevented from keeping such an appointment? What prevented you?

CHARADUTTA

I cannot tell you.

JUDGE

I must insist upon an answer.

CHARADUTTA

I cannot answer you.

JUDGE

You endanger your life by your silence. For the sake of your honour I command you to answer.

CHARADUTTA

It is my honour that forbids me to answer.

SAMSTHANAKA

Listen to him, my lord? He has confessed all. He was going to the garden, he did not go to the garden, he cannot say where he went when he did not go to the garden. He is condemned out of his own mouth. Give sentence on him.

JUDGE

My lord, I am the judge here and not you. I am here to weigh truth and falsehood to hear evidence, and to learn truth. Sit down in your place and be silent.

RECORDER [*to* PROVOST]

It is strange that Charadutta will not answer.

PROVOST

It is so much against him.

JUDGE

Have the officers returned from the garden?

OFFICER

They are here, my lord.

JUDGE

Let them come forward.

An OFFICER *comes forward.*

Tell me, what you have seen and done?

OFFICER

We went with haste, my lord, to the Old Flower Garden, and we found that the body of a woman had been there, but beasts of prey had seized upon it and devoured it.

JUDGE

How do you know that it was the body of a woman?

OFFICER

By the remains of the hair, and the marks of the hands and feet.

RAMBHA

O Vasantasena is really and truly dead, and I am alive to hear it? Accursed be the evil-doer that has done it. Is it you, beggar and murderer? [*She shakes her fist at Charadutta.*]

CHARADUTTA [*as if stunned*]

Dead! dead! Vasantasena dead!

PROVOST

Do you hear what he says? He does not know what he is saying.

JUDGE

Charadutta, you are accused by the Prince Samsthanaka of the murder of Vasantasena: have you any defence to make?

CHARADUTTA

Dead! and I might have saved her.

RECORDER

He means he might have repented in time.

JUDGE

Answer me: have you any defence to make?

CHARADUTTA

None.

JUDGE

Where were you at the time of the murder?

CHARADUTTA

I cannot tell you.

JUDGE

Do you then plead guilty?

CHARADUTTA

No.

JUDGE [*to* SAMSTHANAKA]

Why do you accuse Charadutta? What proof have you of your accusation?

SAMSTHANAKA

My lord, what proof can there be but one? The jewels of Vasantasena!

JUDGE

If they had been found, but they have not been found.

SAMSTHANAKA

They have not been sought for. Where should they be but in the house of Charadutta? Send officers, my lords, to the house of Charadutta; see whether the jewels that Vasantasena was accustomed to wear are not to be found there. Those jewels, if they are found in that impoverished house, will speak the truth louder than I, they will at once prove the crime and show the reason of the crime.

CHARADUTTA

Let my guilt rest on this question. Search my house, and if a single jewel of Vasantasena is found there, let me be held guilty of a viler thing than murder.

JUDGE

Go, let the house be searched. [*Officers go out.*] Again, Charadutta, it is for your sake that I search fully into the matter. Innocence fears no exposure, and though the evidence so far is against you I do not doubt that this last accusation will turn to your favour.

CHARADUTTA

How can I care any longer if I am found guilty or innocent if Vasantasena is really dead?

SAMSTHANAKA

It is the hypocrite who speaks. Wait, you will see the hypocrite confounded, the robber disclosed, the murderer convicted.

RAMBHA

This is a matter, my lords, in which it would be well for you to call me as a witness.

SAMSTHANAKA

Do not listen to her; what has she to do with this matter? This is a fact to be made evident; not an argument to be decided.

JUDGE

Charadutta, do you desire the evidence of Vasantasena's mother?

CHARADUTTA

I need no evidence. I await the test.

RAMBHA

Very well, my good sir. I have no wish to press into the company of my betters, whether it be to do good to them or to do harm to them. I am sure it is Prince Samsthanaka who knows all about it, and what he finds out will be sure to be the truth. [*She looks impudently at* SAMSTHANAKA.]

JUDGE

Has the officer returned from the house of Charadutta?

An OFFICER *carrying the toy cart containing the jewels of* VASANTASENA *comes forward, followed by* MAITREYA *in great agitation.* MAITREYA *thrusts himself forward.*

MAITREYA

Friend, peace be with you!

CHARADUTTA

Perhaps I shall find it again.

MAITREYA

What is this? Why are you here? Why have these men forced their way into your house?

JUDGE

Be silent there, and let the officer come forward and deliver his report.

OFFICER

My lords, I went to the house of Charadutta, and this man offered violent resistance to my entry. I went in, and had not searched long before I found, thrust aside into a corner as if to escape observation, a child's toy cart filled with jewels. It is here. [*He hands it to the judge.*]

JUDGE

What is this, Charadutta?

CHARADUTTA

Either I am bewitched . . .

JUDGE [*to* RAMBHA]

Are these the jewels of your daughter?

SAMSTHANAKA *gets up and goes down as if to examine them.*

RAMBHA

I must see them closely: give them into my hands; my eyes are old.

SAMSTHANAKA [*significantly*]

Tell the truth.

JUDGE

Are these ornaments your daughter's?

RAMBHA [*peering into them*]

They are very like, I would not be saying they are the same.

SAMSTHANAKA

Fifty suvarnas if you tell the truth.

PROVOST

Surely you will know them if they are your daughter's?

RAMBHA [*to* SAMSTHANAKA]

I want a hundred. Well, well, it is difficult to trust one's eyes, what with these cunning workmen. They are very like.

SAMSTHANAKA [*aside*]

A hundred then.

JUDGE

You cannot declare on oath that they are not your daughter's?

RAMBHA

My lord, I have no doubt about them now. I have recognized them by a secret sign. They are my daughter's.

JUDGE [*to* CHARADUTTA]

Does she speak the truth?

CHARADUTTA

Yes.

JUDGE

How have they come into your possession?

CHARADUTTA

I do not know. Some enemy has done this.

JUDGE

Again you will not answer me.

CHARADUTTA

I have nothing to answer. The gods are in league against me. [*He looks wildly round him and says as if speaking to himself:*] I seem to be dreaming, and yet I am awake, and you are the judge, and you are debating about my life, and Vasantasena is dead, and yet I cannot awaken.

JUDGE

Officer, remove him from his seat.

OFFICER *takes his seat from* CHARADUTTA.

CHARADUTTA

Do you see, Maitreya? I must not sit down before these lords or, if I do, only in the dust. But what does it matter?

MAITREYA [*pointing to* SAMSTHANAKA]

There is the enemy who has done this!

SAMSTHANAKA [*laughing scornfully*]

Little Brahmin, have a care. Your virtuous friend there has killed Vasantasena and robbed her of her jewels, and if you are not careful I will have you arrested for helping him in the matter.

MAITREYA

Son of an adultress, monkey tricked out with gold, stuffed stock of vices, it is you, you, who dare to accuse this man who has never plucked a flower roughly from its stalk — you accuse him of a crime more hateful than has ever been seen in this world! I will break your head into a thousand pieces with this staff, as knotty and crooked as your own heart! If I could only say what I know!

SAMSTHANAKA

Listen, my lords, to this suspicious violence. They are in league together.

CHARADUTTA

Maitreya, my friend, be silent. For my sake.

JUDGE

Stay, let your inconsiderate friend give witness on your behalf. I see only one chance for you. Sir, you seem by your language to be an intimate friend of Charadutta?

MAITREYA

I am his slave: he is my benefactor.

JUDGE

Well and good. And you are frequently in his company?

MAITREYA

He is rarely out of my sight.

JUDGE

Were you with Charadutta at noon to-day?

MAITREYA

Yes — no.

CHARADUTTA *looks at him fixedly, and slightly raises his hand.*

JUDGE

You were not?

MAITREYA

No.

JUDGE

Where was Charadutta at that hour?

CHARADUTTA *looks at him more fixedly.*

MAITREYA [*slowly*]

I do not know.

SAMSTHANAKA

Judge, pass sentence. Is there further cause for delay?

JUDGE [*speaks aside with* PROVOST *and* RECORDER, *then rises*]

Charadutta, it rests now only with you to confess the crime which has been proved against you. The evidence is complete, the charge has been substantiated on every point, and you can give no account of yourself at the time when the murder must have been committed. That which has seemed to our minds incredible, has none the less been proved to the conviction of our minds. It is better, at the last moment, to admit the truth, rather than to add falsehood to dishonour. Charadutta, are you guilty of the murder of Vasantasena?

CHARADUTTA

I am of a race incapable of crime. But what is it to me if I am innocent and a crime is imputed to me which I cannot gainsay? If Vasantasena is dead, of what use is life to me? Have your way. What is it I am to say after you?

SAMSTHANAKA

That you killed Vasantasena: say that you killed her.

CHARADUTTA

You have said it.

SAMSTHANAKA

Sentence, my lord.

JUDGE

Charadutta, you have confessed that you are guilty of the murder of Vasantasena. This is your sentence: the ornaments of Vasantasena be hung about your neck, and that you be conducted by beat of drum to the place of execution in the southern cemetery, and that you be there beheaded by the public executioner, and your body impaled upon a stake for a warning to all malefactors in the kingdom of our supreme lord and king.

SAMSTHANAKA

Let the king's justice be done.

CHARADUTTA

Let the justice of the gods be done.

The curtain falls as the OFFICERS *lay hold on* CHARADUTTA.

ACT V

A place of execution, an open space at the cross-roads, by the side of the public cemetery. A crowd is assembled.

FIRST BYSTANDER

Are they nearly here?

SECOND BYSTANDER

Nearly. The Chandalas are leading Charadutta by way of the four stations, and at each station they read the proclamation. He must be nearer now to the fourth than to the third.

FIRST BYSTANDER

What a pilgrimage! The shame will be more to him than death itself. He was the proudest man in the city.

SECOND BYSTANDER

Do you believe he is really guilty?

FIRST BYSTANDER

How is it possible either to doubt or believe it?

THIRD BYSTANDER

I salute you, neighbours. Are you here for the ceremony? They tell me it is not the only one. Is it true that Aryaka has escaped?

SECOND BYSTANDER

It is perfectly true. He has got through the gates, nobody knows how. They flock to him from all sides.

THIRD BYSTANDER

Do you think anyone here would be averse to a change of dynasty?

FIRST BYSTANDER

Hush! it is better to wait and accept whatever comes to pass. Perhaps Charadutta will be the last victim of Palaka.

SECOND BYSTANDER

Is he not a friend of Aryaka?

THIRD BYSTANDER

Would that Aryaka were here to help him.

FOURTH BYSTANDER

They are coming, they are coming.

A CHILD

Lift me up, father. I want to see them. The man is hung all over with garlands. Are they going to offer him up to the gods?

FOURTH BYSTANDER

Yes, my son.

CHILD

But I do not see any priests. Why does he carry a sharp stake over his shoulder!

FOURTH BYSTANDER

You will see presently. Get down now, and wait till the Chandalas stop here. This is the best place for seeing.

FIRST BYSTANDER

Is this the face of a criminal? He steps as noble as a beast led to the sacrifice. But it is a sacrifice that will not please the gods.

CHARADUTTA *appears between the two* CHANDALAS, *garlanded with flowers, like a beast led to the sacrifice, and with the jewels of* VASANTASENA *tied round his neck. He bears on his shoulder the stake with which he is to be impaled. His clothes are covered with dust; his face is pale and weary.*

FIRST CHANDALA

Out of the way, sirs, out of the way for Charadutta, all good people who stand about here to see a man's procession on his way to death. Make way for the executioners of the king, the doers of justice by beheading of living and impaling of dead men. This is Charadutta, who bears the stake and the garland; he goes now on his way to death as a lamp goes out when it has not been replenished with oil.

CHARADUTTA

What are these crows, good Chandala, and why are they croaking about this place?

SECOND CHANDALA

They are before their time, sir; they wait on you. Stand out of the way there, what is there for you to

see but a tree that is to be cut down, a good man that is to be cut short by the axe of fate?

CHARADUTTA

The people look kindly on me; I am at least not shamed before their kind hearts, though I stand here like an ox to be slaughtered; they cannot help me in this life, but I can see that they pray that my fortune in my next life may be better than it has been in this.

FIRST CHANDALA

Out of the way, sirs, back; what do you want to see? There are four things not to be looked at: Indra when he bends his bow, a cow when she gives birth to her calf, a shooting star, and a good man when he is leaving this life. But look you, brother, a hint, the whole city is under sentence; can the sky weep without a cloud?

SECOND CHANDALA

No, brother Goha, the sky cannot weep without a cloud, but this cloud is a cloud of women-folk, and the rain falls from their eyes, and cannot so much as lay the dust.

CHARADUTTA

Why do all these pity me and cry, Alas! poor Charadutta? I am to die, and not one of them can help me.

FIRST CHANDALA

Let all men hear the proclamation of the king. First, let the drum be beaten. *The drum is beaten.*
And now hear, all of ye. This is Charadutta, the son of Sagaradatta, the son of the Provost Vinayaddatta,

by whom Vasantasena the courtesan has been robbed and murdered. The spoil has been found in his hands, and he has confessed his crime with his own mouth. He has been convicted and condemned to death in the name of King Palaka; so will the king punish all malefactors accursed in this life and the next.

CHARADUTTA

O Chandalas, how is it that your hands defile a name that has been made sacred to the gods, age after age, by priests about a sacred fire? But now, my friends, turn from me; they hide their faces in their cloaks. Once every stranger desired to be my friend!

FIRST CHANDALA

Every man loves him that is in prosperity, and him that is in adversity he forsakes. Does this surprise you, and yet you are a wise man?

CHARADUTTA

O Maitreya, why does not my one friend come to fulfil my last wishes!

SECOND CHANDALA

Are you ready, sir, and if you are ready will you come a little further along?

VOICES [*behind the scenes*]

Father! father! Charadutta!

CHARADUTTA

Chandalas, will you grant me one favour?

FIRST CHANDALA

What! will you take a favour from *us?*

CHARADUTTA

You are of the caste of the Chandalas, but you are gentler than the king, who is a Brahmin. Hear me, good friends. Let me see the face of my child before I die.

THE VOICE [*within*]

Father!

FIRST CHANDALA

It shall be done. Make way there: let him pass. This way, sir.

MAITREYA *makes his way through the crowd, leading* ROHASENA.

MAITREYA

Quick, child, quick, or your father will be dead before we come to him.

ROHASENA

Father! father!

CHARADUTTA

My son! Alas, child, will you leave me as thirsty in the other world as I am now? Such little hands as yours, what food and drink can they offer upon my grave?

MAITREYA

Friend, is it too late to speak now? Let me speak, tell all, and save you.

CHARADUTTA

These Chandalas can take my life: would you take my honour?

ROHASENA

Where are you taking my father, you wicked Chandalas?

FIRST CHANDALA

Hark, ye, my boy, they who are born Chandalas are not the only ones. There are Chandalas who do evil to good men.

ROHASENA

Then why are you killing my father?

SECOND CHANDALA

It is the king's order; it is his fault, not ours.

ROHASENA

Kill me and let my father go.

FIRST CHANDALA

A long life to you, my brave child.

CHARADUTTA

The essence of the world is mine: such treasure belongs to the poor man as well as to the rich. I have one friend, and in him I shall live twice over.

MAITREYA

One friend indeed: here's another. Pray, master Chandalas, one body is as good as another to your trade: let my friend's go: you can have mine.

CHARADUTTA

What have I said? I thought adversity left a man without a friend, and here are two of them!

FIRST CHANDALA

Now then, stand back, all of you. What do you want to see now? A good man who has fallen into darkness, like a bucket of gold when the rope is broken and it falls into the well!

CHARADUTTA

They are going to beat the drum: it tells the time when I am to die. O child, if I had but something to leave you! I have only the cord of the Brahmin, and I will take it from my shoulder and put it over yours. It is not made of gold or jewels, but a Brahmin who wears the cord is the mate of the gods and can talk with them face to face.

ROHASENA [*pointing to the jewels round* CHARADUTTA'S *neck*]

Father, give me back my jewels.

CHARADUTTA

They are not yours, dear child, and they are not mine. I cannot give them to you.

ROHASENA

But yes, they are mine, a lady gave them to me.

CHARADUTTA

What lady?

ROHASENA

I don't know, a beautiful lady. She put them into my toy cart because it wasn't the gold one.

MAITREYA

What is this! Tell me all about it, child! Quick! you shall be cleared of this charge after all, Charadutta!

ROHASENA [*crying*]

I don't know, I don't know.

CHARADUTTA

My friend, I begin to understand something of this mystery, but it is too late to matter, and now it only adds to my misery. Was not this, which has been part of the noose of fate in snaring me, but some lovely secret deed of Vasantasena, and Vasantasena is dead, and what does it all matter now? Say nothing, Maitreya, death is welcome, and now it will come with more sweetness.

The drum is beaten on a sign from the CHANDALAS, *and they come nearer to* CHARADUTTA, *who is about to say farewell to his son. At the sound of the drum a passage is suddenly opened in the crowd, and armed men come forward, followed by* SAMSTHANAKA. *They fall back; he comes insolently forward.*

SAMSTHANAKA

Why do you beat the death-drum before I am ready to look on my enemy dying? I was feasting in my palace, when I heard your voices, Chandalas, as harsh

as a cracked bell, and the first beat of the death-drum. But the destruction of an enemy is a better feast than has ever been served in any palace. What a crowd has come together, and merely to see this man die! If so many flock together to see this beggar die, how great a concourse would there be if it were a great personage, like myself, that was to be put to death. He is decked out for the slaughter like a young bull, he is turned to the south to die. But why is not the proclamation said over again? I would have it said over and over again, until everybody has heard it. I would have Charadutta say it over with his own mouth. Chandalas, why have you delayed the execution so long?

FIRST CHANDALA

My lord, we cannot both delay and hasten. If you would be quicker than we, that do but our trade by rote, why, sir, do it yourself. Will you have my axe, or my fellow's? [*He lifts the axe high in the air.* SAMSTHANAKA *steps back hurriedly.*]

ROHASENA [*to* SAMSTHANAKA]

Kill me and let my father go.

SAMSTHANAKA

Put down your axe, down, edge to the earth, not that way. Who is the child?

SECOND CHANDALA

He is the son of Charadutta.

SAMSTHANAKA

Kill them both.

CHARADUTTA

Go home, my child. Who knows what this madman will do? Maitreya, take him with you into safety. He must live, and not be dishonoured by my shame.

MAITREYA

O my friend, do you think that I mean to outlive you?

CHARADUTTA

Friend, you are alive, and no power forbids you to live. Do not cast away what is not yours to give or take.

MAITREYA

I will put the child into a place of safety, and then, then I will come back and share your fate. [*He falls at* CHARADUTTA'S *feet, embraces him, and is going to lead away the child.*]

SAMSTHANAKA

Stop! I said, kill them both, father and son.

CHARADUTTA *lifts his hands in terror.*

FIRST CHANDALA

The king's orders concerned the father, not the son. We carry out our orders. Off with you, boy!

They thrust MAITREYA *and* ROHASENA *away into the crowd.*

SAMSTHANAKA

As you will. I am concerned only to do justice. But, as many here present look as if they do not believe

that this crime was committed by Charadutta, I call upon him, as he is an honest man, to say now before them all: I, Charadutta, killed Vasantasena. He will not speak. Strike him, Chandalas, as if he were a drum, with your drum-sticks.

FIRST CHANDALA

Are you not going to speak, Charadutta?

CHARADUTTA

Strike, if you will. Your axe will strike harder presently. I am afraid neither of you nor of death; only of one thing: that this thing may be remembered against me, and it may be said that I killed the woman whom I loved.

SAMSTHANAKA

Confess, confess. Speak the truth at last!

CHARADUTTA

What shall I say that I may have peace in my death? That I am a malefactor, that I hated this woman, and that by me this woman . . . Let this man say the rest.

SAMSTHANAKA

Was murdered.

CHARADUTTA

So be it.

FIRST CHANDALA

Come: it is you who have to execute the prisoner.

SECOND CHANDALA

No, the turn is yours.

FIRST CHANDALA

Let us reckon. [*They begin to calculate on their fingers.*] Well, if it is my turn I shall be in no hurry about it.

SECOND CHANDALA

Why so?

FIRST CHANDALA

I will tell you. My father, when about to depart this life to a better, being in the exercise of like functions with ours, a gentle-hearted stemman; my father said to me: Son, when you have a heading business in hand, go about it cautiously, deliberately, do nothing in a hurry. And why? Because, said he, some good man may come forward and pay down the price of his head; or a son at the very next moment of time be born to the king, and a general pardon proclaimed; or an elephant may break loose, and the prisoner may get clean off in the confusion; or (who knows?) there may be a change of rulers, and everybody in prison be set at liberty.

SAMSTHANAKA

A change of rulers! What are you lingering over, Chandalas? To your work, sirs.

FIRST CHANDALA

Have patience, my lord; we are reckoning which of us two is to do the work.

SAMSTHANAKA

Is there an elephant on earth more slow-footed than justice? How long am I to wait on your pleasure? [*He walks up and down impatiently.*]

FIRST CHANDALA

Noble Charadutta, we but do our duty, and duty must be done. Before you kneel down at this block, and after asking your pardon, is there anything you wish to think of or speak out?

CHARADUTTA

If virtue prevail in the world, I ask of the gods that my fair fame may some day be restored by Vasantasena, whether from heaven above or on this earth. Now do your duty.

FIRST CHANDALA

Do you see this block?

CHARADUTTA

Too well.

FIRST CHANDALA

Those that see it as close as you see it now have not much longer to live. [CHARADUTTA *recoils.*] Are you afraid, Charadutta?

CHARADUTTA

Of dishonour, not of death.

FIRST CHANDALA

Sir, in heaven itself the sun and moon are not free from change and suffering: how should we, in this lower world, escape them? One man rises but to fall, another falls to rise; and the vesture of this carcase is at one time laid aside and taken up again at another. Lay these things to your heart, and be

firm. My hand also shall be firm, and the axe shall fall but once. Now must the proclamation be made for the last time. Goha, repeat it.

SECOND CHANDALA

This is Charadutta, the son of Sagaradatta, the son of the Provost Vinayaddatta, by whom Vasantasena the courtesan has been robbed and murdered. The spoil has been found in his hands, and he has confessed his crime with his own mouth. He has been convicted and condemned to death, and we are now to put him to death in the name of King Palaka: so will the king punish all malefactors, accursed in this life and in the next.

FIRST CHANDALA

Kneel down: your neck so: sir, let me arrange your last comfort.

He sets the head of CHARADUTTA *carefully on the block. There has been a movement in the crowd, cries of* "Make way!" *and the* MENDICANT FRIAR *leading* VASANTASENA *by the hand appears suddenly through the crowd, as* CHARADUTTA, *his head lying on the block says:*

CHARADUTTA

The gods are mighty.

MENDICANT

Make way there, good people, in the name of charity. Make way!

The FIRST CHANDALA *has raised his axe; at the stir in the crowd the* SECOND CHANDALA *arrests his arms.*

SECOND CHANDALA

Hold. Someone is coming, it may be from the king.

FIRST CHANDALA

I see only a begging friar and a dishevelled woman.

CRIES

Make way there, make way!

CHARADUTTA [*from the block*]

Good Chandala, I have composed myself for death. Make haste to end this waiting.

VASANTASENA [*crying from the crowd*]

Stop! stop! in the gods' name, stop!

FIRST CHANDALA

Who is this woman that cries and runs like a wounded beast?

VASANTASENA

Stop! it is I. It is I. It is Vasantasena.

FIRST CHANDALA

Can this be Vasantasena?

SECOND CHANDALA

Charadutta seems to say so.

CHARADUTTA *has risen from the block, and stands swaying helplessly.* VASANTASENA *runs up to him and puts her arms round him as if to support him.*

VASANTASENA

It is I, it is Vasantasena. Look at me. I am not too late?

VOICES IN THE CROWD

It is Vasantasena!

CHARADUTTA

Are you alive or dead, Vasantasena?

VASANTASENA

I am alive. But you, but you? I have run, I have run, to save you.

VOICES IN THE CROWD

It is a miracle. Vasantasena is alive.

CHARADUTTA

I think we have both died, but you have brought me to life again.

SAMSTHANAKA

If the dead come to life, where shall I hide from the sight of them? And if she be not dead, where shall I hide from the sight of justice? [*He turns to go. The* CHANDALAS *lay hold of him.*]

FIRST CHANDALA

Sir, you are to remain here.

SAMSTHANAKA

This to me, hound? Let me go.

SECOND CHANDALA

Our orders are from the king, and if this woman has come back from the dead, it is you that must say who sent her there. [*They lay hold of him.*]

VASANTASENA

I thought I had died for you, and it was hard, because I loved you with all my life; and is there any love in the grave? But you too, would you have died for me?

CHARADUTTA

Look, Vasantasena! are not these garlands woven for my death more like bridal garlands? Cannot the death-drums play marriage music as well?

VASANTASENA

Let me die again, only let me hear those words! But what is it they have done to you, and who is it that has sought your life?

CHARADUTTA

They said I had killed you, and for these jewels, which I wear now for punishment; your jewels.

VASANTASENA

Ah, the toy cart!

CHARADUTTA

They have brought me through anguish to this joy.

VASANTASENA [*turning and catching sight of* SAMSTHANAKA, *shrieks:*]

The murderer!

SAMSTHANAKA [*trying to fall on his knees*]

Forgive me, Vasantasena.

The CHANDALAS *hold him up so that he cannot go down on his knees.*

FIRST CHANDALA

Stand up, sir, like a man.

Again there is a stir in the crowd, and MAITREYA *bursts through, almost breathless.*

MAITREYA

Charadutta, you will be saved! I have come. . . . [*Stops as he sees* VASANTASENA.]

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena has already saved me.

MAITREYA

This is a day of miracles. But hear, and not you alone, Charadutta, hear, all of you, Chandalas, guards, people: Aryaka is king, Palaka is killed, Aryaka reigns in his place! Long live Aryaka!

Some in the crowd repeat it, others look at one another in doubt.

Glory to Siva, glory to the god of battles! I hold the signet ring of Palaka, that Aryaka has taken off his finger. I bring it from Aryaka to Charadutta that he may not only be set free but that he may be next to Aryaka in his kingdom.

SAMSTHANAKA

Alas! woe is me, my brother-in-law is dead, and I am myself no more than a dead man.

MAITREYA

Hold him, Chandalas, in the name of Aryaka. Guards of Samsthanaka, your master is a captive. Aryaka will be your master!

GUARDS

Long live Aryaka!

CHARADUTTA

O Maitreya, then it is not my life only that is saved but liberty itself. Let us give thanks to the gods.

VOICES

Long live Aryaka! Long live Charadutta!

CHARADUTTA

And now, Vasantasena. . . .

VOICES

Down with the murderer! Send him after Palaka! He would have killed Charadutta!

SAMSTHANAKA

Charadutta, save me! I have no hope but in you. [*Breaks away from the Chandalas and grovels before him.*] Save me!

VOICES

Kill him! kill him! Give him to us.

VASANTASENA [*taking the garland from* CHARADUTTA'S *neck and throwing it over* SAMSTHANAKA'S]

Take the death-garland!

SAMSTHANAKA

I die, I die. I kiss your feet, most noble Charadutta, I kiss the dust before your feet. Only save me from death!

VOICES

Give him to us.

CHARADUTTA

Have I power over this man?

VOICES

Yes, yes.

CHARADUTTA

Will you do with him in everything as I bid you?

VOICES

Yes, yes.

CHARADUTTA

Then I bid you with all due haste. . . .

VOICES

To kill him.

CHARADUTTA

No, to set him free.

VOICES

Let him be killed, let him be killed.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena, why is he to be set free?

VASANTASENA [*taking the garland from the neck of* SAMSTHANAKA, *and throwing it on the ground*]

Samsthanaka, your punishment shall be the mercy of Charadutta.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena has said it. Loose him and let him go.

SAMSTHANAKA [*rising*]

Gods! I am alive again. [*He goes out.*]

MENDICANT

After all I did well to help a woman, though it is against the rules of my order.

VASANTASENA

This was my helper, when I was nearly dead. He led me into safety.

CHARADUTTA

What shall we do for this good friar?

MENDICANT

Give me leave to go begging about the world in the old way: my masters, save me and your own selves from the misery of riches! [*He goes out.*]

VOICES

They are coming this way! Aryaka and the soldiers are coming this way! Let us go and see them.

All run out, leaving CHARADUTTA *alone with* VASANTASENA *and* MAITREYA.

CHARADUTTA

Shall we follow these children? They go to see a new thing, having forgotten the thing now past. But here is a man and woman who have seen death, each for the sake of the other; and only by life can death be forgotten. When we find Aryaka we will bid him to our marriage-feast.

VASANTASENA [*kissing his hand*]

My lord!

CURTAIN

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